

# ABBEY HERITAGE AUDIT 2017

Ref No. CH06833

## FINAL REPORT

**Prepared by**

**Zena Hctor**

**Heritage Services,**

**Newtownlynch,**

**Doorus,**

**Kinvara.**

**Co. Galway.**

**Email: [zenahctor@gmail.com](mailto:zenahctor@gmail.com)**

**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council**



**This project has been funded by the Heritage Council.**

## **Acknowledgements**

The Heritage Council  
Abbey Heritage Group  
Frances Holohan, Audit team member  
Therese Murphy Audit team member  
Noreen Shiel Audit team member  
Marie Mannion, Heritage Officer, Galway County Council  
Dr Christy Cunniffe, County Galway Community Archaeologist  
John Holohan, Abbey  
Peggy McHugo, Tomanymore  
Bridie McClearn, Tomanymbeg  
Vincent McDonagh, Knockaun  
Joe Rourke, Tomanymbeg  
Peggy Dolan, Tomanynabraher  
Patrick Dolan, Tomanynabraher  
Stanny Burke, Eagle Hill  
John Donnelly Conicar  
Paddy Kelly, Coolfin  
Aled Jones, Kylemore  
Teresa Roche, Kylemore  
Gerard Dervan, KNoCaunnakirkeen  
Ann Kelly, Ballygowan

# CONTENTS

	Page Nos.
<b>1. Introduction</b>	
1.1. Project Background	1
1.2. Project Brief	1
1.3. Methodology	1
1.3.1. Desktop Inventory	1
1.3.2. Preparation for Field Survey	2
1.3.3. Field Survey	2
1.3.4. Training of team members	4
1.3.5. Community Consultation	5
1.3.6. Data Storage	8
<b>2. Overview of Audit Findings</b>	
2.1. Introduction	10
2.2. Topography, Soils and Habitats	10
2.3. Wildlife Sanctuary	11
2.4. Hydrology, Callows and River Crossings	12
2.5. Medieval Secular Settlements	14
2.5.1. Ringforts	14
2.5.2. Souterrain	14
2.5.3. Coolfin Castle	15
2.6. Medieval Ecclesiastical Settlements	17
2.6.1. St Fechins Monastic settlement	17
2.6.2. The Cartuhsian Monastery	18
2.6.3. The Franciscans of Kilnalahan	19
2.6.4. Lady's Well	19
2.7. Medieval Gastronomy	20
2.7.1. Rabbit Warrens?	20
2.7.2. Eel Weirs	20
2.8. Industrial Archaeology	22
2.8.1. Mills and Milling	22
2.8.2. Forges and Ironwork	23
2.9. Life in the 18 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup> centuries	24
2.9.1. The Big House	24
2.9.2. Memories of Upper Ballygowan	25
2.9.3. The Evictions	26
2.9.4. The remains of Eviction Houses	26
<b>3. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	
3.1. Conclusions	28
3.2. Recommendations for Future Projects	28

<b>Maps</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1: Townlands selected for Audit by Abbey Heritage Group highlighted in yellow	3
2: First Edition OS map Ballygowan Townland	25
<b>Figures</b>	
1: Notice of community meeting to discuss upcoming Heritage Audit (Sunday July 16 <sup>th</sup> Parish Newsletter).	5
2: Notice placed in Abbey Parish newsletter on successive Sundays between July and December 2017	5
3: Public Invitation to Exhibition and talk sent through the Galway County Heritage email system	7
4: Example of site specific report from the Abbey Heritage Audit database.	8
5: Drumlins and eskers in the Abbey area (Source: GSI)	10
6: Interpretation drawings of geophysical survey carried out by TVAS Ltd. at Abbey (2010)	18
<b>Photographs</b>	
1 & 2: Exploring sites with local residents	4
3 & 4: Team members Therese Murphy and Noreen Shiel exploring and photographing heritage features.	4
5-10: Heritage Week 2017 Event: 'A Sense of Place' Walking Drawing Workshop	6
11 & 12: Abbey Heritage Audit Illustrated talk in Abbey Community Centre, February 17, 2018.	7
13-15: Wildlife Sanctuary signage in Abbey	11
16: West face of Duniry Bridge	12
17: Ballygowan Ringfort	14
18: Remains of Coolfin Castle	15
19: Breach in lower west wall of Coolfin Castle	15
20: Ogee headed loop in west wall of Coolfin Castle	16
21: St Feichins well and penitential stations	17
22: Rabbit Warren in Hatfield Forest Essex England	21
23: Could this be a possible Rabbit warren in Ballygowan townland?	21
24 & 25: Millstones from Ballygowan Mill	22
26: Makers initials on forge gate Tomanynabraher	23
27: Doorway at Eaglehill House	24
28 & 29: Remains of 'Eviction Houses' Ballygowan townland	27

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Project Background**

Following a successful application to the Heritage Council by Abbey Heritage Group, Abbey, Loughrea Co. Galway, for a Community Heritage Grant, the Abbey Heritage Audit commenced in July 2017.

The central aim of the project was to compile a comprehensive baseline database of the built, natural and cultural heritage of the local area surrounding Abbey village which will inform future research, development of actions and conservation of local heritage sites.

Zena Hctor was appointed in July 2017 to act as Project Manager with responsibility for completion of all tasks outlined in the project brief.

### **1.2. Project Brief**

A brief of work was compiled as part of the grant application to the Heritage Council.

The brief included the following tasks:

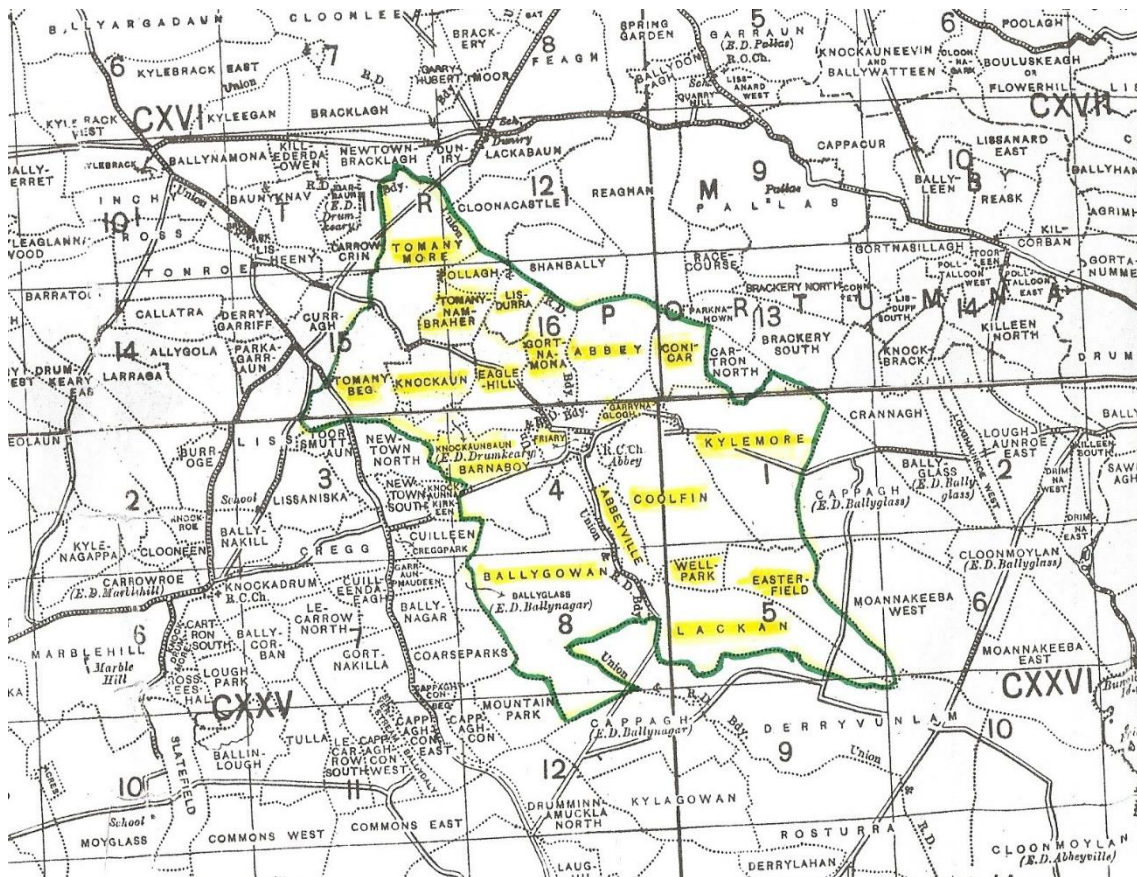
- Compilation of a desktop inventory of heritage sites within 21 selected townlands.
- Field technique instruction workshop to be delivered to team members, as per technique detailed in Hctor Z. 2015 *'Reading the Local Landscape A Heritage Audit Toolkit for Local Community Heritage Groups'* Galway County Council.
- Public workshop presenting the project and inviting participation by the community in the gathering of data on the identified local heritage sites to be delivered
- Heritage sites identified through the desktop inventory to be assessed in terms of access, intrinsic interest and condition (fixed point photography and written description)
- Database to be designed and created for the purpose of storage of audit data
- Data collected to be uploaded to database
- Heritage Week event to be undertaken
- Preparation of final report including recommendations for future use of data collected.

### **1.3. Methodology**

#### **1.3.1. Desktop Inventory**

Twenty-one townlands surrounding the village of Abbey were selected by Abbey Heritage Group to be the focus of the audit (Map 1).

A desktop inventory of the potential heritage sites for field survey, located within these townlands was compiled by Zena Hctor. While undertaking this task, she provided instruction to the Abbey Heritage Group audit team members as to desk research sources of information and how to access these sources and maps suitable for field work online. The Heritage Council Map Viewer was an invaluable one-stop source of information in this process.



Map 1: Townlands selected for Audit by Abbey Heritage Group highlighted in yellow.

### 1.3.2. Preparation for Field Survey

The Audit field survey was conducted on a townland by townland basis. Preparation for field survey consisted of printing out six inch OS townland maps downloaded from the Heritage Council Map Viewer and marking sites of interest noted through desk research. Based on this list of potential sites in a townland, the Abbey Heritage Group team members made contact with the relevant landowners and sought permission to enter onto private land where required to inspect and document site access, condition and features of interest.

### 1.3.3. Field Survey

The field survey commenced with the townlands in the north of the selected area and the team worked southwards. Field work was undertaken every Thursday between July and December 2017. Through the community consultation process, the team arranged to meet with townland residents and enquire about and discuss sites of local heritage interest. This led on several occasions to long conversations and the discovery of many local stories, connected to the local heritage, which were previously unrecorded.





Photographs 1 & 2: Exploring sites with local residents

#### 1.3.4. Training of Team members in Audit Technique

Training in desk research and accessing on-line sources of information was provided to the Abbey Heritage Group team members during the initial stages of the audit and field work preparation. Gathered data was initially stored on an excel sheet and referenced under individual townland identification numbers. As field work progressed each Thursday between July and December, the team members accompanied the project leader Zena Hctor into the field and received instruction in the recognition and documentation of heritage features as sites were visited.



Photographs 3 & 4: Team members Therese Murphy and Noreen Shiel exploring and photographing heritage features.

### 1.3.5. Community Consultation

A public meeting to discuss the planning for the Heritage Audit took place in Abbey Community Centre on July 17, 2017. All members of the community were invited through word-of-mouth and a notice in the Parish newsletter.

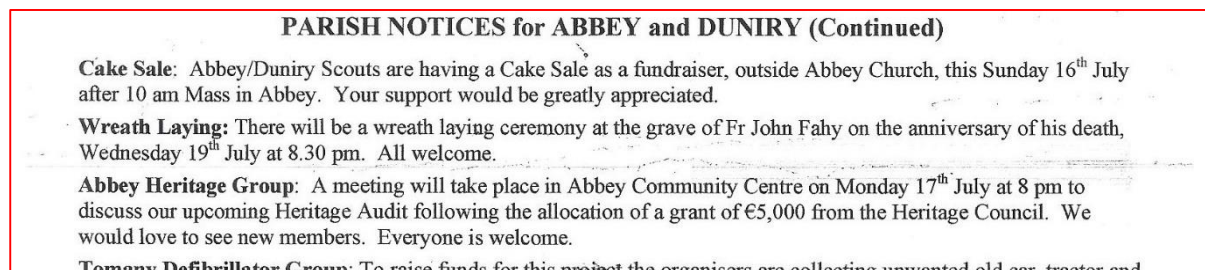


Figure 1: Notice of community meeting to discuss upcoming Heritage Audit (Sunday July 16<sup>th</sup> Parish Newsletter).

On each and every following Sunday between July and December, the community were reminded, through a notice in the Parish newsletter, that the Audit was progressing and an invitation was extended to share local heritage knowledge, stories and folklore.

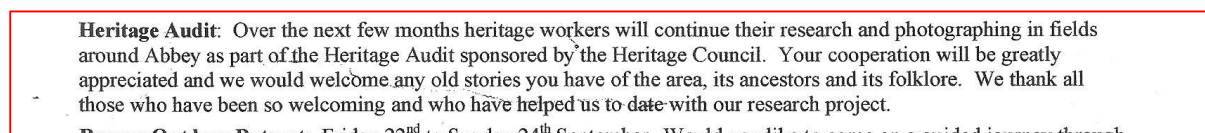
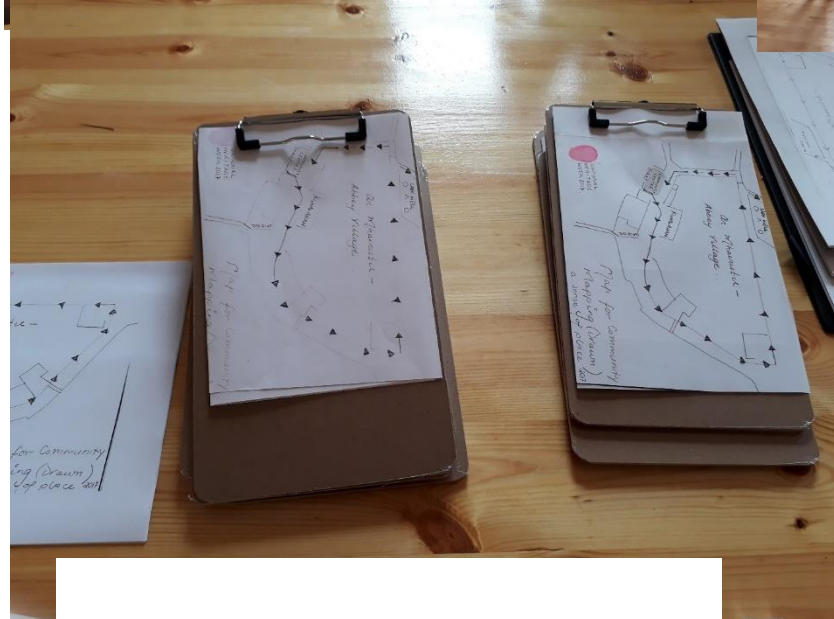


Figure 2: Notice placed in Abbey Parish newsletter on successive Sundays between July and December 2017

Prior to each day of field survey, contact was made by team members with the local residents of the particular townland to be surveyed, to obtain permission to enter onto private land and arrange appointments to meet and talk to interested individuals. Through this process, many local residents became actively involved in the audit, guiding the survey team to sites of interest and providing previously unrecorded information with regard to these sites.

During Heritage Week 2017, a 'Sense of Place' walking and drawing workshop was held in Abbey Community Centre and around the village. The purpose of the event was to enable members of the local community to identify features of local heritage interest around the village and to express their own interpretation of what the features meant to them through sketching. The event was led by local artist, Therese Murphy, one of the Abbey Heritage Audit team members. The event was very well received (although the weather was a bit wet!) and the participants expressed surprise at how differently they perceived everyday familiar features when they took time, stopped, had a good look and thought about them. This event helped to raise local awareness of the Heritage Audit and the value of local heritage features which we often overlook on a daily basis. An exhibition of the work of Abbey Heritage Group was displayed in the Community Centre and refreshments were served to allow time for a chat





Photographs 5-10: Heritage Week 2017 Event: 'A Sense of Place' Walking Drawing Workshop

A public exhibition and illustrated talk based on the Audit findings was held in Abbey Community Centre on Saturday February 17, 2018 from 3pm to 5pm. Individual invitations were sent to all local residents who had met with the survey team and contributed to the findings throughout the project. A general community invitation was extended through the Parish newsletter, the Abbey Heritage facebook page and through the Galway Community Heritage email system.

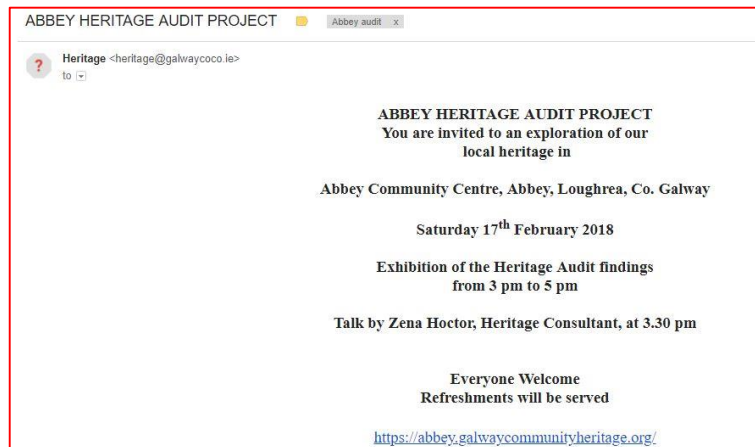


Figure 3: Public Invitation to Exhibition and talk sent through the Galway County Heritage email system



Photographs 11 & 12: Abbey Heritage Audit Illustrated talk in Abbey Community Centre, February 17, 2018.



### 1.3.6. Data Storage

Abbey Heritage Audit 2017	
Abbey Heritage Audit 2017 Site Information Report	
AHA 2017-SITE ID	Site Name: Ballygowan Mill
Date of Survey	Example
Townland: Ballygowan	Surveyors Names: Zena Hootor, Therese Murphy, Frances Holohan, Noreen Shiel
ITM - E: 573052	
ITM-N: 704037	
Site Description	<p>Ballygowan Mill is noted as the property of Thos Burke in the Books of Survey and Distribution in 1641. It is described as a 'corn mill and kilns'. The mill is marked 'Ballygowan Mill' on the 1st Ed OS map and is listed as 'house, offices, corn-mill, kilns and land' in Griffiths Valuation with John Finn recorded as the occupier, leasing from John Aylward (in chancery). This property is connected with the 'Ballygowan Evictions' carried out in 1886. As it is referred to as a 'corn mill' its purpose was the shelling and grinding of oats to make oatmeal.</p> <p>There are very few remains of the mill structure visible today. A rubble limestone wall with lime mortar that currently forms the east wall of a modern hay barn may be the original west wall of the 19th century mill. The lower shed which was originally a grain store and adopted as a piggery in the 1970s appears to have been built between 18 (examination of OS 6 inch maps). All of these buildings were built into elevated land to the rear.</p>
Site Condition	<p>The original mill stones are located in the lower farmyard and were covered with brambles and scrub on the day of survey. The owner, Ann Kelly, indicated the general location of the stones to the survey team. Both are sandstone, well preserved, circular with a diameter of 1 metre 5 cms. Their geology indicates that they were probably sourced and made locally. A well defined herring bone tooling is present on the working face of both the bedstone (lower stationary stone) and the runner stone (upper moving</p> <p>Poor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very little remains of the mill structure.</p> <p>Comment</p>
Sensitivity	The millstones need to be protected from breakage and removal.
Associated stories	The Finn Family were evicted from their home at Ballygowan Mill during the Lewis Estate evictions of 1886 (Land Wars). The song 'Sweet Ballygowan' was composed locally to commemorate the evictions.
Contact person	Mrs Ann Kelly
Significance	<p>International <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments</p>
Access	<p>Private access <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open to the public <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Parking - car <input type="checkbox"/> Parking - coaches <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Footpaths <input type="checkbox"/> Cycle path <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Waymarked walking route <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Universal access <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments</p>
Heritage Designation	<p>Within SAC <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Within SPA <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Within NHA or pNHA <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>RMP <input type="checkbox"/> RMP Number</p> <p>RPS <input type="checkbox"/> RPS Number</p> <p>NIAH <input type="checkbox"/> NIAH Number</p> <p>Comments: This site is not recorded on the RMP, although it was the site of a mill in 1641 and the millstones survive.</p>
Ownership	<p>Public <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments: No</p>
Categories of Interest	<p>Archaeological <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Cultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Natural <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Comments: This is a very important site in terms of local industrial archaeology and local cultural history.</p>
Photo 1	<p>Photo 2</p> <p>Photo 3</p> <p>Comments: This is a very important site in terms of local industrial archaeology and local cultural history.</p>

Figure 4: Example of site specific report from the Abbey Heritage Audit database.

A specially designed database was created to store the data collected through the Audit, within site specific reports. It is constructed in MS Access.accdb format similar to that created as part of the Lough Derg Heritage Audit 2011, in order to create compatibility between the two audits and facilitate exchange of data if required. Data is stored in site specific reports with option to insert three photographs with each site report.

An example of a site specific information report is illustrated above in Figure 4. This form allows all the information relevant to each site to be viewed and updated. The system was created to be dynamic and new sites can be added to the database as Abbey Heritage Group carry out further research in their area.

The database will be stored in the Abbey Heritage Group office in the Community Centre Abbey.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF AUDIT FINDINGS

### 2.1. Introduction

The following is an overview of the variety of sites and features recorded during the Abbey Heritage Audit. Full detail and photographs of each of the 75 audited sites is stored in individual site specific information reports in the Abbey Heritage Audit 2017 database.

### 2.2. Topography, Soils and Habitats

The topography of the Abbey district derives from a post glacial landscape. Drumlins, crag and tail formations, moraines and eskers are present indicating an ice flow direction NW-SE. Scattered in the hollows between these glacial till formations are several wet areas and natural springs.

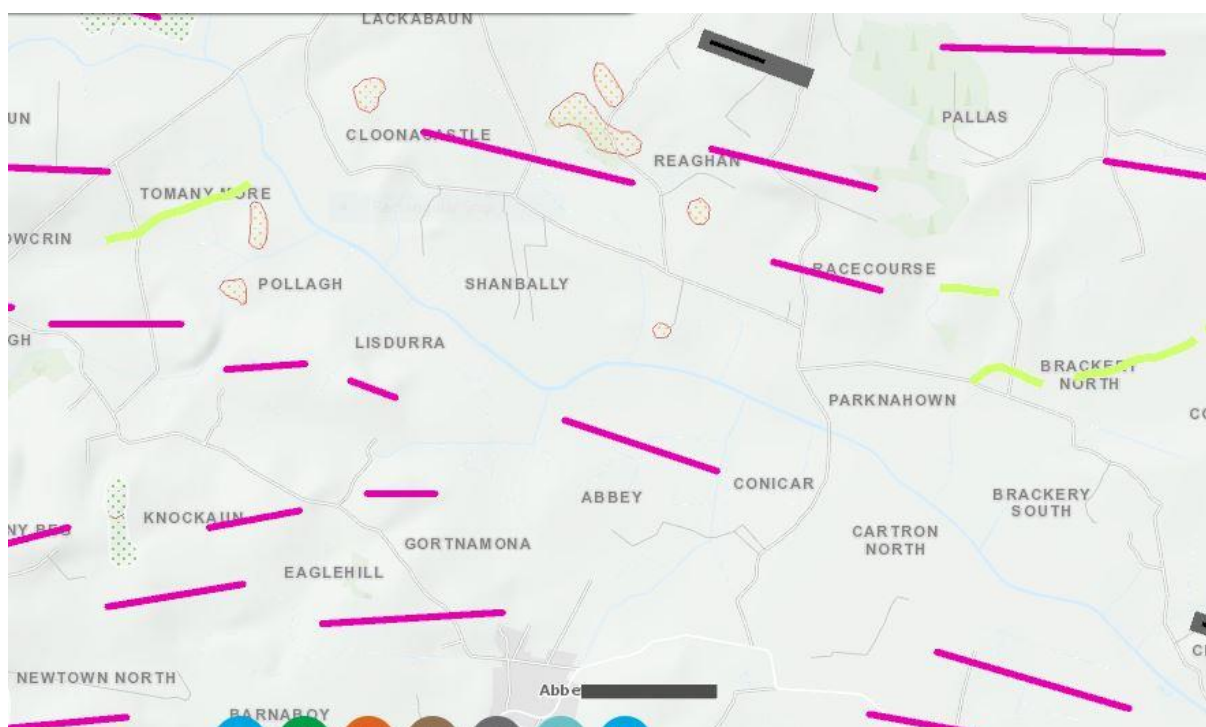


Figure 5: Drumlins and eskers in the Abbey area (Source: [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie))

Drumlins	
Crag and Tail	
Eskers	

At the boundary of the three townlands - Lisdurra, Eaglehill and Tomanynabraher is an area of reedmarsh surrounded by natural regenerating woodland. The marsh is formed on undifferentiated lake sediment (Lacustrine type soils) as defined by Teagasc. This soil type is formed when the still water in lakes permits very fine particles (fine sand, silt, and clay) to settle out and to form deposits. These deposits are fine, very well sorted and have a low permeability which leads to the retention of surface water. The marsh at this location is likely to be the remains of a post glacial lake that covered a much wider area. The surface water may be supplemented by underground springs, which are abundant in this region. Today the underlying soils and surface water support a reedmarsh with a dominant vegetation type of reedgrass, sedges, horsetails and willowherb. The reedmarsh is surrounded by a naturally regenerated woodland of willow and hazel and ash on the higher and drier ground to the south and south east. A conifer forestry plantation is located to the east. To the



west is open agricultural grassland grazed by cattle. Similar smaller reedmarsh areas occur in Tomanynabraher, Kylemore and Ballygowan.

## 2.3. Wildlife Sanctuary

In 2011 one of the resulting actions following a Biodiversity training course held in Abbey was the creation of a Wildlife Sanctuary. Local farmer John Donnelly liaised with other local farmers and as a result fourteen farmers agreed to allow their lands to be preserved as a wildlife sanctuary. The Sanctuary spans four townlands and covers a total of 500 acres.

In December 2011 the local schoolchildren joined with the farmers and members of the local community to witness the release of the first pheasants by the Mayor of Co Galway, Michael Maher and mark the launch of the Wildlife Sanctuary.

A bi-lingual illustrated Interpretive panel showing the location of the Sanctuary and the various species to be found in Abbey townland is located along the main roadway close to the National School and the edge of the Sanctuary.

Abbey Heritage in conjunction with Abbey Tidy Towns are also involved in a pollination project with the local Apiary and a habitats restoration project on the local river.



Photographs 13-15: Wildlife Sanctuary signage in Abbey

## 2.4. Hydrology, Callows and River Crossings

The Duniry-Cappagh River drains the audit area along its eastern border with several small streams, arising from natural springs, entering from the west along its length. One of these streams is known locally as 'the Abbey River'. It extends from its source in Ballyglass townland, flowing through the village of Abbey and entering the Duniry River north of Conicar Bridge.

The 'Ballygowan – Brookville' River, an upland eroding stream, flows from the Slieve Aughty uplands across the southern section of the audit area to be joined by several drainage streams in Kylemore Bog before entering the Cappagh River at two points – one below and one above Cappagh Bridge.

The Duniry-Cappagh River floods on a seasonal basis forming 'callows' in the townlands of Conicar and Kylemore. The callows were divided in the early years of the 20th century into sections known as 'the meadow callows' and 'the grazing callows'. Due to the prevalence of rock beneath the surface of the grazing callows section - this area was not suitable for hay production and was thus distinct from the meadow callows. Each year the hay was saved before the expected 'Lady Day Flood' (August 15th) by means of a 'meitheal'. Each of the local families owned a strip of the callow land but they worked together to save the hay. The families who owned land on the Conicar callows were the Moloneys, Donnellys, Cosgraves, Finnegans and Joynts. Each of these families lived in an area known as the 'Paircin' located in the southwest of Conicar townland (opposite to where John Donnelly's house is today).

Within the audit area, two bridges transverse the Duniry-Cappagh River.



**Photograph 16: West face of Duniry Bridge**

The most northerly bridge is a triple-arch road bridge known as 'Duniry Bridge'. It is a protected structure recorded in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) for County Galway and the National Inventory of Architectural Inventory (NIAH). Built c.1800 with local rubble limestone and occasional sandstone, there appear to have been several repairs made to the bridge overtime. The parapet walls on each side are in contrast. Those on the east side have vertical rubble limestone copings, while those on the west have

curved rendered copings. The water passes beneath the bridge through three round-headed arches with tooled limestone voussoirs and plinths. On the upriver east side of the bridge are V-cutwaters which prevent debris carried by floods becoming trapped. On the downriver (west side) are more recent rendered rectangular-profile cutwaters. Local information related that the Black and Tans dynamited a section of the bridge during the Civil War and this may account for the repairs to the upper walls.

The Duniry-Cappagh River was canalised c. 1865 and this event is recorded in the Geological Survey memoirs. This led to the removal of several feature along the river including eel weirs and a corn/tuck mill. Prior to the straightening of the river the nearest crossing point to Abbey was at Cappagh Bridge but following the canalisation, a bridge was constructed between Brackery South

and Kylesmore townlands. By the early 1900s this bridge was no longer in existence and the road at Conicar had been extended to the river and a bridge built here. John Donnelly, a local resident of Conicar recalls that this was a timber bridge. The present day concrete bridge at this point replaced the timber bridge when it was damaged during a storm in the early 1960s (J. Donnelly, Conicar resident, pers comm).

A small concrete bridge at Ballygowan replaced a set of stepping stones across a low ford in the river at this point allowing access to Ballygowan mill. The footsteps are still evident in the stream.

A one arch, hump backed, rubble limestone bridge crosses the Ballygowan stream below Brookville house. This bridge predates the first edition OS townland map of c.1840.

A low stone bridge originally carried the road over a small stream in Kylesmore townland. It was known as 'Friar's Bridge' as it was associated with the story that one of the Friars from Kilnalahan Abbey hid beneath it during the Cromwellian Wars, when the Friars were forced to leave the Abbey. In recent years, the bridge was removed and replaced with a concrete culvert pipe.



## 2.5. Medieval Secular Settlements

### 2.5.1 Ringforts

There are a number of earthen ringforts located within the Audit area. All occur in the western sector of the audit area and a grouping occurs in the north-west around the townlands of Knockaun, Tomanybeg, Barnaboy and Newtown North. Most are single bank with a diameter of approximately 30 metres.

A notable feature of the ringforts in the study area is the height of the lios above the surrounding area giving them a 'platform' appearance. This feature is particularly noticeable at a site in Knockaun townland where the site has been cleared of vegetation and all that remains is an oblong - shaped platform measuring 30m NE-SW and 24.5m NW-SE with the edge defined by a scarp which is 1m in height. As the surrounding topography is an undulating landscape of drumlins this site is easily overlooked but is recorded on the Record of Monuments and Places.

The largest ringfort is located in very south of the Audit area in the townland of Ballygowan. This sub circular monument is located on a north facing lower slope of the Slieve Aughty Mountains, close to the boundary of the upland sandstone with the lowland limestone. The monument measures 38m E-W and 35m N-S. The outer limits of the central lios are defined by a scarp and beyond this is an intervening fosse and outer bank. There is a modern causewayed entrance gap on the north side. This site is a designated National Monument. A Fógra sign has been erected on the site.



Photograph 17: Ballygowan Ringfort

### 2.5.2. Souterrain

In the townland of Knockaunakirkeen (which is just outside the mid-west boundary of the designated Audit area), located on a natural hill surrounded by a 20 year old Ash plantation, is a **souterrain**. A small opening is partially covered by a stone slab and the line of the souterrain is visible above ground where hollows occur in the vegetation cover indicating the line of the roof of the structure. L-shape in plan, the underground structure is built with drystone walls. It appears to consist of two chambers. The first chamber, which runs east-west, was accessible and extends to a length of approximately 7.5metres with a width of 1.7m and a height of 1.8m. A section chamber

appears to extend from the NW end running in an N-S direction. The second chamber appeared to be a lower level than the first but it is filled with rubble and is inaccessible. The floor of the first chamber is of packed earth. There were some animal bones present but these are most likely to be recent.

### 2.5.3. Coolfin Castle



Very little is known of the history of Coolfin Castle but '*in the Inquisitions taken at Galway 24th March 1608 before Geoffrey Osbaldstone Esq., Ulick (3rd Earl of Clanrickard) was seized of several lands and castles including the Castle of Coolfin (and 1 q. in Kynalehan) the a third of a q. near Coolfin...*' (Ref: Griffiths Valuation Name Books).

The Castle was therefore in existence prior to this date and from the remaining structure, the stonework detail would appear to date to the 16th century. Although locally it is believed to be built by the Knight Hospitallers at the time that they took over Kilnalahan Abbey from the Carthusians (c.1320 AD), the historical evidence quoted above and the dates evident from the remaining architectural fragments of the building show that this is not possible.

**Photograph 18: Remains of Coolfin Castle**

All that remains today of the structure is the west wall and adjoining partial sections of the north and south walls. The lower quoin stones have been robbed out of the two remaining corners. The ruins stand on a natural rocky prominence which gives a commanding view of the surrounding countryside illustrating the defensive purpose for which the castle was built.

A large opening in the current ground level of the remaining west wall may originally have been a window opening as internally there is a rectangular embrasure. Above this enlarged opening is a single ogee headed loop window with cut stone pocked surrounds. This is the last remaining intact opening in the building. The lower section of a similar loop opening is located above it in the upper floor close to the north-west gable and the lower section of a third is found in the south wall (on the same floor level as the fully intact example).

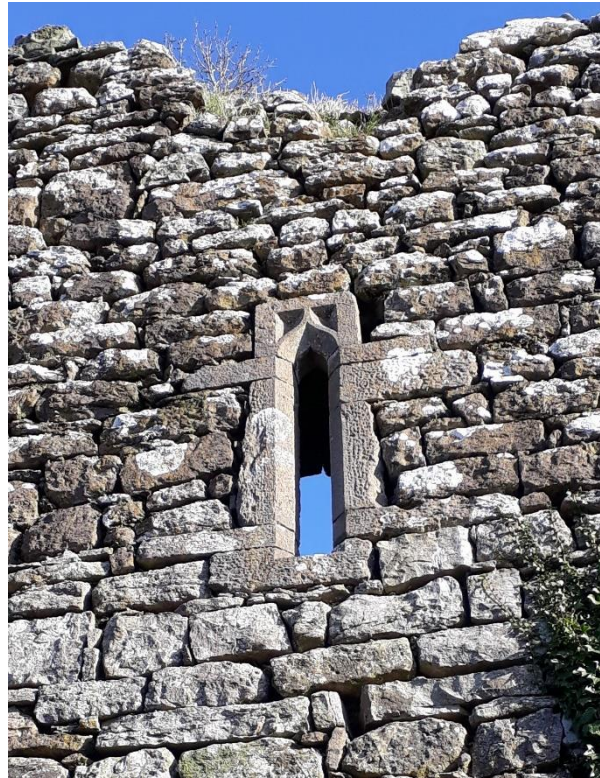


**Photograph 19: Breach in lower west wall of Coolfin Castle**



It is difficult to determine how many floors originally existed as the current ground level is filled with rubble and there is no evidence of an entrance doorway. The site is littered with loose stone and strong ivy growth hides the upper portion of the remaining south wall.

On the external lower portion of this wall, beneath the ivy, there is a large opening with a flat lintel and an arch of voussoirs above. The opening does not extend into the internal space. Its function is unclear but it may be the opening for a garderobe, although it is very large for such a function. The interior of the building is rock strewn and an elder tree is growing in the south-west corner. An internal wall cupboard is located in the south wall and a second in the west wall on the south side of the embrasure.



**Photograph 20: Ogee headed loop in west wall of Coolfin Castle**

## **2.6. Medieval Ecclesiastical Settlement**

### **2.6.1. St Feichin's Monastic Site**

On the boundary between the townlands of Wellpark and Lackan a subcircular graveyard, (N-S 38m E-W 28m) is associated with St Feichin, an early Irish monk who is believed to have had a monastery in this area sometime in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. St Feichin is honoured as the patron saint of Abbey and Mass is celebrated in the cemetery each July. The graveyard is bounded by a drystone wall with access through a gateway in the WSW. The interior of the site rises in a natural hillock, towards the centre and is uneven underfoot most likely due to burials. In the past, this was the local community burial ground and it is believed that in famine times mass graves were opened at this site.

In the year 2000, Abbey Development Committee erected a memorial stone in memory of those buried in the cemetery. The only visible gravemarker within the cemetery is a polished marble headstone dated 1915. In July 2017 a set of outdoor Stations of the Cross were erected around the perimeter of the site by the local community. They originated from the Mercy Convent, Doon, Limerick which closed in 2016. They were purchased at auction by Fr Duggan who donated them to Lackan cemetery.

A holy well associated with the site and St Feichin is located 40m to the NE in the adjoining field. It consists of a natural spring enclosed with a drystone wall. Adjacent to the well are two stone cairns which are penitential stations. In recent years the landowner, Pat Craughwell has built up the stations as they had partially collapsed. Pat remembered a spring issuing from one of the stations in the past, but there is no evidence of this today. This site was a popular place of pilgrimage in the past but is only visited by a small number of pilgrims today. Pattern Day is July 31<sup>st</sup>. The pattern at the site consisted of reciting 15 decades of the Rosary while doing rounds of the well and stations. The water in the well is associated with a cure for eye ailments and rags were traditionally hung on the hawthorn tree growing beside the well.



**Photograph 21: St Feichin's well and penitential stations**



### 2.6.2. The Carthusian Monastery

John De Cogan in a charter of 1252 granted lands in the townlands of Tomanymore, Tomanymbeg, Tomanynamrahar, Lisdurra, Eaglehill and Doorus (with fishing rights) to the Carthusian Order. By 1321 the Carthusian monastery (consisting of an oratory and cells) had gone into decline and the properties were owned by the Knights Hospitallers.

In 1998, archaeologists from Bristol University, England and University College Dublin carried out a programme of soil sampling in the open field on the north side of Kilnalahan Abbey. Concentrations of heavy metals (zinc, cobalt etc.) were found indicating areas of human occupation and possible cell sites dating back to the Carthusian foundation of the 13th century. A follow up programme of resistivity survey indicated a possible plan for the Carthusian monastery. Three trial trenches were excavated. The first trench outside the wall of the Franciscan refectory contained a fill of stones in a wide ditch; the second had evidence of a robbed wall (provisionally interpreted to be the back wall of the Carthusian monastery) and the third revealed a deep ditch and a human bone.



The team completed a similar survey in Abbeyville townland, where a number of earthworks were visible. Soil analysis indicated human occupation and the area was interpreted as a possible 'lower house' of the Carthusian foundation, where guests and lay brethren stayed. (Ref: [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie))

In 2010 a geophysical survey was carried out by TVAS Ltd. in an area of the field to the west of the Abbey where a number of earthworks and features are visible on the surface. The results indicate part of a double ditched enclosure of the type often found surrounding early medieval ecclesiastical sites and possible remains of rectangular structures.

Figure 6: Interpretation drawings of geophysical survey carried out by TVAS Ltd. at Abbey (2010)

### **2.6.3. The Franciscans of Kilnalahan**

In 1371 the Pope granted permission for the establishment of a community of 12 friars and a Guardian at the former Carthusian site and the construction of *“a bell tower, oratory, dormitory and other necessary structures”*. By 1390 the Franciscan Order had taken possession of the site.

A report from 1603 shows that the Franciscans buildings had been largely destroyed by Bingham's troops, leaving it as a charred ruin. King James granted Kilnalahan to John King of Dublin and the Friars were dispossessed but various reports show that they continued to minister within the locality. King sold the property to the 4th Earl of Clanrickarde in 1611. Clanrickarde reinstated the Friars and paid for restoration work which was completed by 1615. However, the Clanrickardes seat at Portumna was taken over during the Cromwellian Wars and the Friars fled from the monastery, living locally until 1662 when the De Burgo estate was restored to the 6th Earl. Yet again during the Penal Times the Franciscans were forced to move from the ecclesiastical buildings and live in the locality ministering in secret to the people. In 1710, when the Penal Laws were relaxed, the Grand Jury of Galway records that Friars were living again at Kilnalahan.

By the late 1700s however the Friary had been abandoned and has been in ruin since.

Local belief is that when the Franciscans left the Abbey in the 1700s they set up home in the townland of Tomanynabraher (translated as Tomany of the Brothers) on a farm currently in the possession of the Dolan family. The Abbey Heritage Audit has recorded a ruined gable wall in the farmyard which may have been part of a dwelling place at that time. Also located within this townland is an ancient apple tree known as ‘the Monks Tree’. In the adjacent townland of Pollagh is a weir on a stream, known as ‘Fr Hughes Waterfall’. Fr Hughes was a Franciscan monk who was Guardian of Kilnalahan in 1824 and he is believed to have blessed the waterfall giving the waters a curative power for sprained ankles.

The remains of Kilnalahan Abbey today are a designated National Monument in State Care. The north wall of the nave and chancel, the east chancel wall and the east, south and west walls of the cloister area survive with three side chapels off the north chancel. Architectural features include a piscina where the original entrance to the nave would have been located, a fireplace and ovens with chimneystacks in the west wall off the cloister, the east window and memorials to the various Bourke families within the side chapels. Most of the remaining architectural features of the Abbey date to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **2.6.4. Lady's Well**

A well dedicated to Our Lady is located to the north of Kilnalahan Abbey. Set within its own grounds the area is bounded by a rubble limestone and sandstone wall. Within the grounds are two wells, (one in a well house), a rag bush and stone cairns which are all part of the pilgrimage pattern. Traditionally pilgrims visit between 15th August – the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – and the 8th September – the Feast of the Birthday of Our Lady.

It is highly probable that the well was originally used by the monks (Carthusian and Franciscans) of Kilnalahan for their source of water and was likely to have been situated just outside the original 13<sup>th</sup> century ecclesiastical site boundary. The designation as a 'holy well' was very much established by the late 18th century as witnessed by De Latocnaye, a Frenchman while traveling around Ireland in 1796-7. He describes *'a score of women with their clothes tucked up, moving in single file round the enclosure on their bare knees'*. He was told by a local that the water cured all and how he could

attain its miracles – *'the blind return walking, the lame speaking, and the deaf seeing. If you have any infirmities, just go round on your knees seven times and see what happens.'*

The well is still visited today and the rituals performed by a small number of pilgrims. A Dawn Mass is said at the site every Easter Sunday and an evening mass on the 8th September. Two interpretive panels mounted on the boundary wall provide a short history of the site and illustrate the required rituals to be performed by pilgrims.

## **2.7. Medieval Gastronomy**

### **2.7.1. Medieval Rabbit Mounds?**

Rabbit Warrens evolved from the Anglo-Norman concept of free warren, which had been essentially the equivalent of a hunting license for a given woodland. In parallel domestic warrens were developed as enclosed areas where the person claimed ownership of the rabbits. Such an enclosure was referred to as a 'coneygarth'. Archaeologists in England have identified these medieval landscape features referring to them as 'pillow mounds'. Very little work has been carried out in Ireland to identify such structures.

Medieval monasteries practised 'cuniculture' in 'coneygarths' - raising rabbits for meat and fur. Variations of the name 'coneygarth' arise including cony-garth, conegar and coneygree. The townland name 'Conicar' translates as rabbit warren.

Several local residents of the Abbey district remember hunting for rabbits in the 1950s/60s and 70s. Conicar was well known for its rabbit population as were several other surrounding townlands. John Donnelly who farms in Conicar townland remembers several mounds in the surrounding fields. The land however was levelled for intensive farming purposes. John took the Audit team to Parknahown townland on the opposite bank of the Duniry River from Conicar. On inspection there appeared to be several mounds in the field adjoining the river. These require further investigation to determine whether they are possible 'pillow mounds' or 'coneygarths'.

In a field 500m to the west of Coolfin crossroads on the north side of the road are two large mounds with young ash trees growing on the top. In appearance the mounds are similar to the rabbit warren mounds identified at Hatton Forest Essex England. This is an unrecorded site and requires further investigation for possible identification (Photographs 22 & 23).

### **2.7.2. Eel Weirs**

An Eel Weir is recorded on the Duniry River in Tomanymore townland on the 1st edition OS townland map (c.1840) and but it is not present on the 1865 revision of this map. It is likely that this structure was removed during the canalising of this river c.1865 (referenced in geological memoirs). Just upriver of the weir on the Clooncastle side of the river a corn mill, kiln and a tuck mill is recorded on the 1840 map but again these structures are not in evidence in 1865 as the river course has been changed and the structures removed. These industries must have had an effect on the water quality of this section of the river and it is unlikely that an eel weir would have been very productive while they were in operation. It can be surmised then that the eel weir preceded the mills and may have dated back into the 1700s or earlier. On the first ed. OS map there is another eel weir just north of the bridge at Crannagh and three beyond the Abbey area, in the townland of Cloonmoylan close to Lough Derg. Eels were an important part of the medieval diet and many monasteries operated eel traps and weirs.





**Photograph 22: Rabbit Warren in Hatfield Forest Essex England**



**Photograph 23: Could this be a possible Rabbit warren in Ballygowan townland?**



## 2.8. Industrial Archaeology

### 2.8.1. Mills and Milling

Quern stones, originally used for domestic milling purposes, approximately 0.4 metre diameter, were recorded during the Audit in the townlands of Tomanynabraher and Garrynaglogh.

A large domed quern stone has been inserted onto the top of a circular stone pedestal and a stone cross placed on top to create a landscape feature on the Village Green in Abbey. The origin of this quern stone is uncertain - but there was a grain mill in the village on the opposite side of the road known as 'Donoghues Mill' and it may be connected to this site. The stone cross is likely to be the original finial cross from the nearby RC Church of the Assumption, which may have been removed during reroofing work c.1960

Dating back into the 15<sup>th</sup> century Ballygowan Mill is noted as the property of Thos. Burke in the Books of Survey and Distribution in 1641. It is described as a '*corne mill and kilns*'.

The mill is in operation in the early 1800s as it is marked '*Ballygowan Mill*' on the 1st Ed OS map and listed as '*house, offices, corn-mill, kilns and land*'. In Griffiths Valuation (c.1850) John Finn is recorded as the occupier, leasing from John Aylward (in chancery). However the mill is not recorded, for some reason, in '*The Mills and Millers of Ireland of about 1850*' by William E. Hogg. The property is connected very strongly in local memory with the 'Ballygowan Evictions' carried out in 1886 (see section 2.9.2.).

There are very few remains of this ancient mill structure visible today. A rubble limestone wall with lime mortar that currently forms the east wall of a modern hay barn may be the original west wall of the 19th century mill. And the lower shed which was adopted as a piggery in the 1970s may also be part of the original mill. The older remaining stone buildings are all built into elevated land to the However, the original mill stones survive. They are sandstone, well preserved, circular with a diameter of 1 metre 5 cms. Their geology indicates that they were probably sourced and made locally. A well-defined herring bone tooling is present on the working face of both the bedstone (lower stationary stone) and the runner stone (upper moving stone). The central hole of the bedstone is 28cms in diameter with an inner rebate which creates an opening 18cms in diameter. The runner stone has a 38cm diameter opening with a rebate creating a 15cm diameter opening. The runner stone has a metal rynd fitted into a rebate in its working face. The mill rynd is cruciform with a central square hole (5cm sq.) for the shaft.



**Photographs 24 & 25: Millstones from Ballygowan Mill**

The source of water to the mill is difficult to determine today. The current owner Ann Kelly said that when her husband was building the piggery in 1979 they uncovered a stone lined channel where the water ran. This channel was then covered over with a concrete tank. A drainage channel with a low level of water flows out beneath this tank to the river below today. There is evidence of some stone revetting in the sides of this channel and it is probably the original mill tail race. It is possible that a stream coming down from the mountains to the rear of the property was diverted and the water driven through a chute to a horizontal wheel which turned the millstones. The water then flowed into the river through the tail race. However there is no visible evidence of such a system above ground today.

### 2.8.2. Forges and Ironwork

A 'Smithy' is recorded on the first Ed OS six-inch townland revision map of 1865 of Ballygowan. Griffiths Valuation shows that John Meara was the occupant of a forge at this location c.1850, leasing it from Martin White, who lived in Brookville House. However no trace remains today except for a laneway into the site the entrance to which has a forge made gate.



A number of wrought iron forge gates were recorded through the Audit. Some of these are still in use but others are thrown aside in sheds and field corners. One of these gates, which is still in use, is located on the Dolan farm in Tomanynabraher townland. On the handle of the gate are the inscribed initials WM which are thought to indicate "William Mahony" a local blacksmith. The Mahony Family had a forge at Derrybrien (local information).

In Ballygowan townland an ornate pedestrian entrance gate to a ruined house (known locally as Mullins House) bears the inscription '*Minogue Whitegate*' with this manufacturer's trademark shamrocks inscribed. The same makers name and mark can be seen on the gate in the arch of a former grain store opposite the Community Centre in Abbey village known locally as 'Holohans' Shed'

**Photograph 26: Makers initials on forge gate Tomanynabraher**

The Abbey Village water pump is a recorded structure on both the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and the County Galway Record of Protected Structures. It was installed c. 1900 and it supplied the water for the village prior to the development of the group water Scheme in the 1960s. Made from cast iron it has a fluted cylindrical shaft, a spout with a simple bucket grip and a domed cap with a pointed finial. The slender curved tail is described as a 'cow's tail handle'. The less well maintained pumps in Conicar and Coolfin townlands are the same design and were no doubt from the same manufacturer.

## 2.9. Life in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century

### 2.9.1 The Big House



The earliest of the 'Big Houses' in the audit area is Eagle Hill House which was built c.1750. It is a regionally important house and listed on both the County Galway Record of Protected Structures and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. This two storey house has a five bay front elevation with a single bay breakfront. The round headed main entrance to Eagle Hill House has an ashlar limestone doorcase, stone steps, cobweb fanlight and timber door. Both side elevations of Eagle Hill house are bow shaped and to the rear is a two storey bow ended stairs return. Weather hung slate covers the south west side and the rear stairs return of Eagle Hill House. The rear stairs return of Eagle Hill House is lit by a round-headed window opening with double timber casement three-pane windows containing coloured glass margins and a spoked fanlight. The entrance gateway to Eagle Hill House consists of square-headed ashlar limestone piers with moulded cornices and pyramidal caps, between which is set a cast-iron double-leaf gate with decorative 'human hand' hinges. Rubble limestone walls curve into the gateway.

**Photograph 27: Doorway at Eaglehill House**

Brookville House in Ballygowan townland is a two storey over basement house with a one and a half storey rear return. It has a three bay front elevation with central one bay shallow breakfront. The doorcase is a block-and-start painted stone surround, approached by a series of stone steps guarded with metal railings. Brookville is registered on the Record of Monuments and Places.

Samuel Lewis in his 'Topographical Dictionary of Ireland' records Brookville as the seat of Martin White in 1837. White was still leasing the property from the Aylward (Lewis) estate at the time of Griffith's Valuation c. 1850 when the buildings were valued at £7. The 1901 census records Patrick Collins and his family living in Ballygowan. Patrick's grandson Martin lives at Brookville today.

Kilmora House was built c.1840. Due to their architectural importance the house and its outbuildings are registered on the County Galway Record of Protected Structures and on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The two storey house has three bays to the front, side and rear elevations. Two centrally placed chimney stacks on the slated hipped roof give the house a balanced classical appearance. To the rear are 3 rubble stone, slate roof outbuildings with arches picked out in yellow brick detail. The elliptical headed doorway of Kilmora House has a moulded render surround, overlight, sidelights and cut limestone steps. The road entrance to Kilmora house is a double leaf cast iron gate set between limestone piers. To the front of the piers are cut stone 'jostle stones' which acted to prevent carriage wheels hitting off the piers.



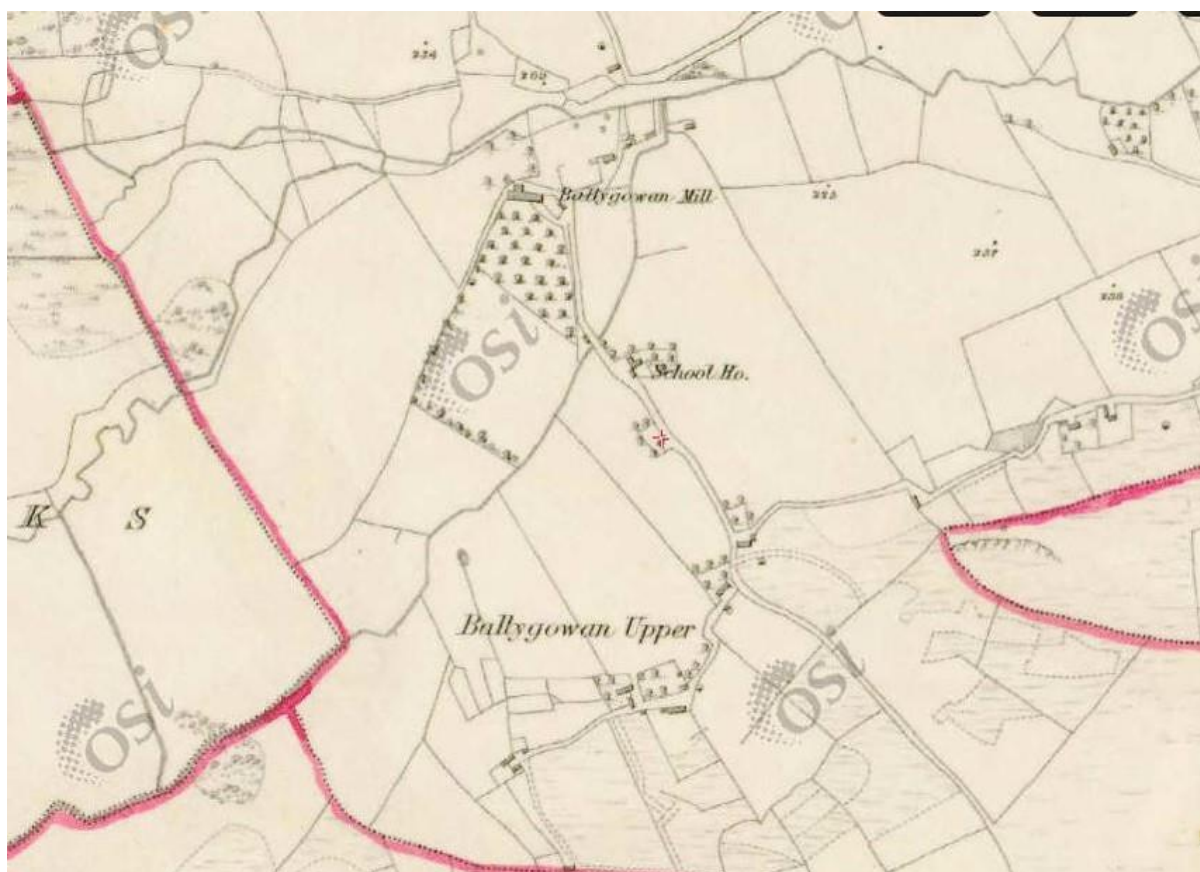
### 2.9.2. Memories of Upper Ballygowan

Ballygowan Upper Village is connected in local memory with the Ballygowan Evictions of 1886. It was located on the lower slopes of the Slieve Aughty Mountains close to the boundary between the Old Red Sandstone and the Lower Limestone.

The OS first edition six- inch map which records the Pre-Famine landscape shows a number of buildings along a lane system and a school house in this area. Griffiths Valuation of c. 1850 records five families living in this area. The heads of each household were M Walsh, Mary Murphy, William Lynch, Mary Larkin and John Walsh.

The 1865 OS 6 inch townland revision map (post Famine) shows less houses and the school house is no longer present.

It is unclear how many people were still living in the village at the time of the evictions and what impact the evictions had - but by the early 1900s the OS six inch map is showing that the village has almost disappeared and is most certainly unoccupied. Nothing remains today, but a very strong local memory connected to the Land Wars and evictions of 1886. The song 'Sweet Ballygowan' was composed by local man, Patrick Kelly of Monahaba while he was living in America, to commemorate the evictions (Ref: Schools Manuscripts).



Map 2: First Edition OS map Ballygowan Townland



### 2.9.3. The Evictions

John Michael Aylward Lewis inherited the Lewis estate in 1824. He lived in nearby Ballynagar House. Hussey De Burgh (1878) in the 'Landowners of Ireland' lists John M.A. Lewis under the landowners of 3,000 acres and upwards. Mr Aylward is in possession of 6,683 acres values at £1,339 at this time. By the 1870s his representatives were recorded as the owners of over 6000 acres in County Galway. On the 9th of August 1886 Mrs Lewis of Ballynagar make an application to the Property Defense Association to provide caretakers for several farms on her property where evictions were about to take place. Following the famous 'Woodford evictions' and the Saunders Fort eviction on August 27th 1886, the evictions on Mrs Lewis estate took place the following day August 28th. (Ref: The Woodford Evictions Report to the Committee of the Property Defence Association 21st October 1886). The Finns of Ballygowan Mill were among those tenants evicted.

In 1983, Jim Fahy a reporter with RTE interviewed the then 96 years old Pakie Conroy of Ballygowan about his memories of the evictions. During this interview Pakie remembered that the Land League would not let people pay their rent and if they did they would be boycotted. The first person to be evicted was Patch Donohue and he went to live in Molloy's Barn where he died later. Pakie Conroy was present at the wake where clay pipes were smoked. He remembered that when the Finns of Ballygowan Mill were evicted, one of them hid in the house and wouldn't leave so the Army had to be sent for. A regiment of Highlanders in kilts came and a battering ram was used to knock Finns house. The Plan of Campaign raised some money to build timber huts for the evicted but many had to live in sheds or in the homes of their neighbours. Pakie Conry remembered that the Downeys had been evicted and that they came to live in his house – all sleeping in one room. Pakie described the timber huts that were built as one room with a fireplace and chimney.

Paddy Kelly, living in Coolfin townland today, remembers stories of a family evicted from Ballygowan living in a small shed in their farmyard for a number of years.

### 2.9.4. The remains of 'Eviction Houses'

Ruins associated with the evicted families are found today adjacent to what is known as 'Mullins House' locally. 'Mullins House' is no longer occupied and is a typical 1920s Land Commission House. On its western side and to the rear are the ruins of two small stone houses with outhouses. The Griffiths Valuation maps show this site as occupied by Honoria Donohue in 1845 with a '*house, offices and land*' on 23 acres.

A further ruin is located on the northern riverbank to west of the bridge over the river at Ballygowan Mill. Here the foundation of a three room house is still visible and Griffiths Valuation (c.1850) records Michael Kelly as the occupier.

In 1850, 26 families were recorded as occupying houses and land in Ballygowan townland. The evictions took place in 1886 and the 1901 census recorded 10 families in the townland. Of these only 6 of the original 26 family names of 1850 still remained.

Following the sale of the Lewis Estate under the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, some of the families that had emigrated following the 1886 evictions began to return and purchased farms. Family names that re-appear in the 1911 census include Burke, Kelly and Finn.





Photographs 28 & 29: Remains of 'Eviction Houses' Ballygowan townland



### **3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1. Conclusions**

The Abbey Heritage Audit recorded and documented 75 heritage sites within the townlands surrounding the village of Abbey in County Galway. This illustrates the wealth of heritage and history that is present in very local areas. The sites highlighted in Section 2 above are just some of the heritage uncovered. All of the sites are detailed in the accompanying database. The level of detail obtained was possible due to the involvement of the local community in the process. Thanks are due to the people who permitted the audit team to enter onto their property to inspect sites and gave of their time to talk about local heritage and guide the team to sites of interest.

#### **3.2. Recommendations for Future Projects**

##### **Ballygowan Mill and the Adopt-A-Monument Scheme**

One of the sites that was particularly interesting in terms of its age and local connections was Ballygowan Mill. Although it is evident from historical sources that this was the site of an operational mill in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this site is not a recorded monument. It is strongly recommended that this site is entered onto the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

The millstones that still survive at Ballygowan Mill should be protected and moved to a safer location, where they can be viewed and their importance highlighted. Any movement to and installation at another location (either on site or elsewhere), should be supervised by a qualified archaeologist and/or conservation engineer.

Interpretation of the mill, its structure, remains and connections to local life and memory should be researched and developed. When complete, this interpretation should be uploaded to the Abbey Heritage and Galway Community Heritage websites and should be part of a permanent display if the millstones are moved and installed at another site.

It is highly recommended that this project should be forwarded as a potential candidate for the Heritage Council 'Adopt-A-Monument' scheme.

##### **Kilnalahan Abbey**

Kilnalahan Abbey is a National Monument in State Care. Conservation work is required to the roof of the Bourke side chapel within the Abbey in the near future to protect the structure and the memorials housed within. It is recommended that contact is made with the OPW by the local community to advance this work.

On-site interpretation for the visitor to the Abbey is currently limited to a small lectern style panel which was installed by Bord Fáilte in the 1970s. It is recommended that a more up-to-date and informative panel illustrating the history of the site and the remaining architectural features be developed and installed. The new panel could be sited outside the entrance to the graveyard to minimise any ground disturbance within the surrounds of the monument. This work should be carried out in consultation and agreement with the OPW. Installation of a panel will require ministerial consent due to the designated monument status of the Abbey.

### **Medieval Gastronomy**

Galway has been designated as the European Region of Gastronomy for 2018. Several local heritage groups in the County have been gathering information about their gastronomical heritage and posting it on the Galway Community Heritage website.

The medieval diet would have included rabbits and eels and these foodstuffs were probably farmed by both the monastic and secular communities of Abbey. The landscape features of eel weirs and possible rabbit warrens discovered during the Abbey Heritage Audit should be further researched and interpreted.

### **Virtual Heritage Trail**

75 heritage sites have been documented and uploaded to the newly created Abbey Heritage Audit database. Many of these sites are located on private land and access is limited. It is recommended that further work is done to map these sites onto GIS to create a virtual heritage trail, providing photographs and sound bites of information for each site.

### **Heritage Week 2018**

To maintain community interest in the Audit and the heritage features identified, it is recommended that a 2018 Heritage Week event is presented by Abbey Heritage which will further highlight the Audit and its recommendations. The aim of the event should be to encourage community participation in the projects outlined above and in the future conservation and development of potential sites.