



Adopt a Monument

Research Toolkit

March 2020



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council





INTRODUCTION

Now that we are all staying safe at home, it might be an opportunity to begin a research project on your adopted monument or the monuments of your locality. The Heritage Council hopes that the tips and resources provided here can be used by people outside of the Adopt a Monument scheme as this short toolkit provides guidance on researching heritage, history and stories from the comfort of your own home. It gives some pointers on how to get started and outlines the vast amount of information that is available online to help along the way. Not all monuments are castles, cathedrals or prehistoric tombs - they can be lime kilns, cottages, handball alleys, walled gardens and other more recent and humble structures

Researching your monuments and your local area can be exciting and rewarding. Of course you may already know quite a lot about your monuments, but there is always the opportunity to discover new information and stories about the wider local area through research and there is potentially a lot of new information you can discover online.

It could include:

- Folklore and stories associated with the monument
- Old photographs, sketches and drawings
- Archaeological excavation reports and details of artefacts found in the area
- The background to the name of the monument and associated historical figures

To illustrate this, throughout this toolkit we will reference links in the various sources to some of the Adopt a Monument sites.

Research Questions

It is best to think of research as a list of questions about your monument that you want to answer. This will depend on what you already know. A useful way to start is to brainstorm and write down all the questions that you want to find out answers to. Here are some of the questions that could be asked about any site or monument.

- How old is the monument? How long was it in use and when did it fall out of use?
- Who constructed the monument and how did they build it? Where did they get the materials?
- What type of monument is it? Are there similar monuments elsewhere? What makes the monument distinctive?
- What was the purpose of the monument? What do we know about the people who used it?
- What can we learn about the monument by studying its physical layout and attributes?
- Are there any recorded historical events or personalities associated with the monument?
- Is it possible to construct a timeline that shows the history of the monument over the centuries?
- Did the monument change at any time over the course of its history and if so, do we know why?
- Are there any major gaps in our knowledge about the monument?
- Is there anything about the monument that experts or scholars have been unable to explain?



BRAINSTORM



These are broad questions, but as you work through them and answer one or two, other more specific questions will crop up. Be aware that there are some questions we have about monuments that may never be answered; the information has simply been lost through the centuries.

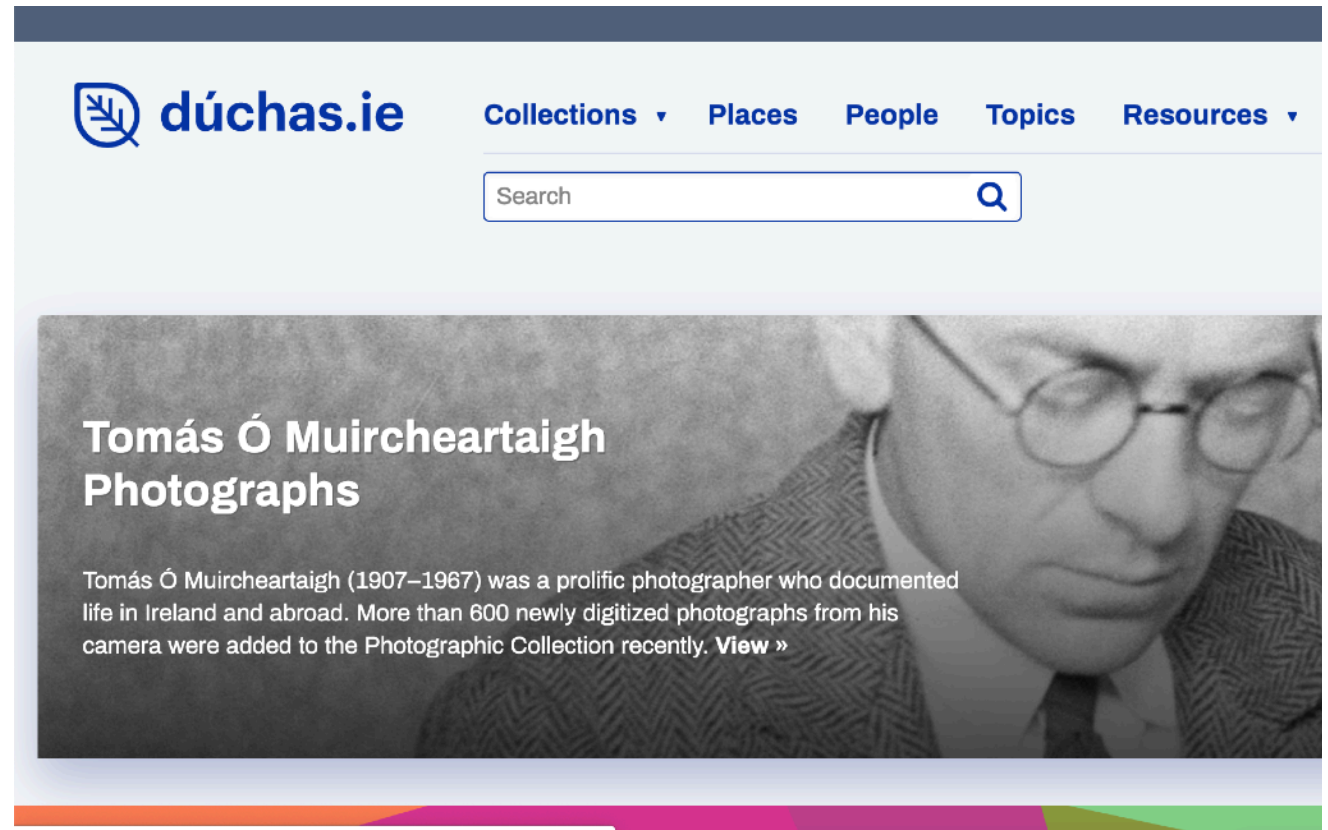
Evaluating Online Sources

A huge and growing amount of information of use for local heritage and historical studies is now available online. Accessing information online can save a lot of time and effort and is much easier than going through paper files and documents.

However, caution is advised when using online sources. Sometimes it isn't clear who runs the website or who compiled the information. This can bring the reliability of the information into question. You should first try to find out who owns and runs the website and who compiled the information on it. Everyone has biases, so be aware of that. You should also look out for references or sources that were used as these could be useful for your own research. Many of the websites included in this toolkit are state agencies, universities and reputable organisations, and the information is reliable.

Recording source information

As well as being able to evaluate sources, you should also develop a clear, methodical system to record the details of each source. These



dúchas.ie - National Folklore Collection

details must be clear enough to allow someone else to retrace your steps and find the source. You should take care to note the following about each online source you consult:

- Full web address or URL for all online sources
- Date on which you accessed the source (this is particularly important for online sources as websites can change frequently)
- Author(s) of the information (the name of the person where this is apparent, or the name of the organisation/institution that manages the website)
- Title of the book/journal article/newspaper/document where you have accessed it online
- Date and place of publication
- Publisher/publishing company

- Location where you acquired the source (name of library, web address etc.)
- Reference number, if any (this is most important for archival or manuscript sources)
- Page number

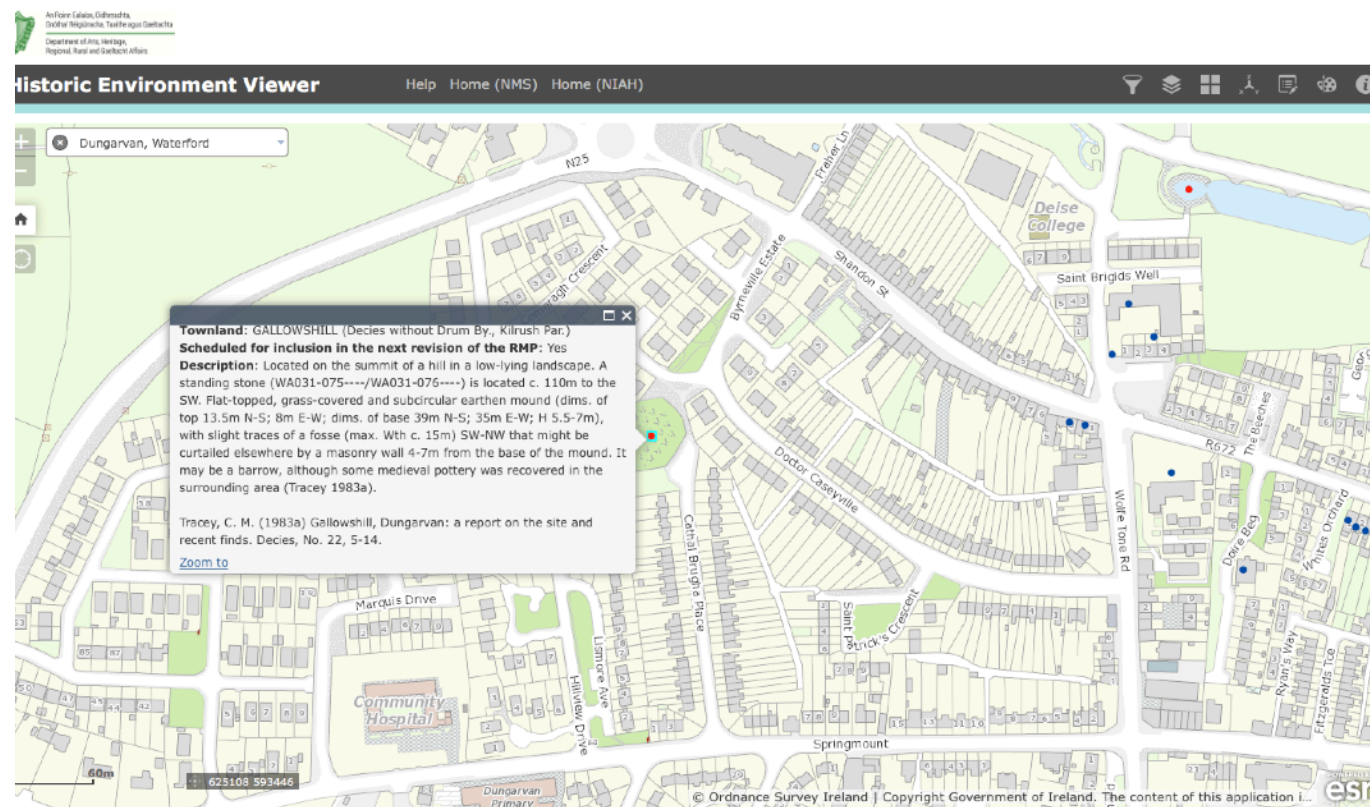
Where there is a team of people conducting research, use a template to make sure there is consistency in the way information is recorded. It can also be well worthwhile recording your progress in a journal or diary.

Irish online sources

National Monuments Survey

(www.archaeology.ie)

There are over 138,000 archaeological monuments in Ireland, ranging from megalithic tombs over 5,000 years old to ruined medieval churches from the 17th century. The National Monuments Archaeological Survey of Ireland has details of all of these and can be accessed online at www.archaeology.ie. There is an interactive map viewer where you can zoom into any part of Ireland. Each red dot indicates an archaeological monument. You can also use the search function to find any townland or address. When you find your monument on



SMR database record for Gallowshill, Dungarvan, archaeology.ie

the map, it will be represented by a red dot. Click on this to access the record for the site. This will give you a written description and the SMR reference number. The written descriptions can be quite detailed and provide sources for further investigation, including references to scholarly articles. Many of these monuments are protected under the National Monuments Act - the website archaeology.ie provides details about the types of protection that applies.

Apart from obtaining information on your own monument, you can also browse other archaeological sites in the area, or monuments in the same class at county or national level. This additional information can help to place your own site in its broader context.

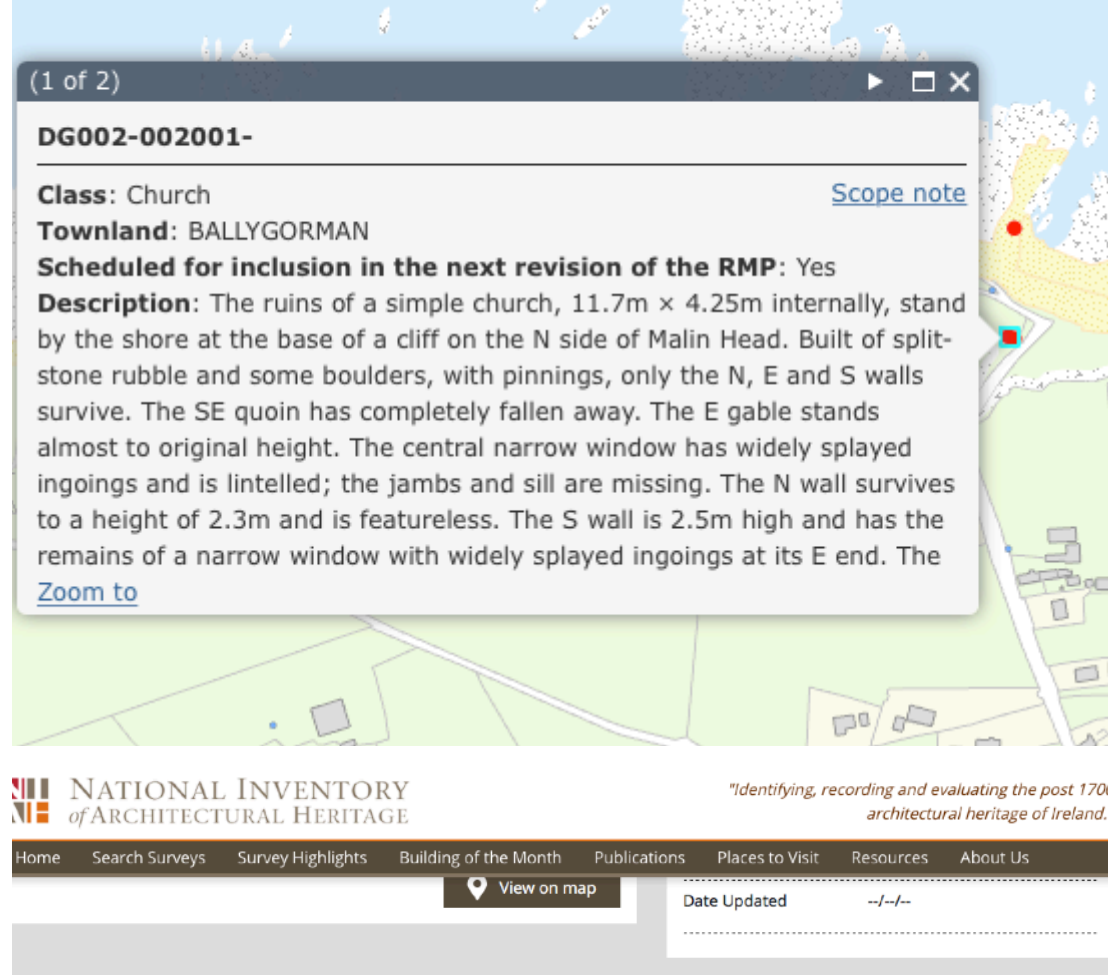
The top screenshot shows what is available on the National Monuments Archaeological Survey for **Malin Well Old Church in Co. Donegal**. The record gives a detailed physical description of the structure, tells us about the association with St. Morialagh and also informs us that a carved stone head found on site is now in the National Museum of Ireland.

Buildings of Ireland (www.buildingsofireland.ie)

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage complements the National Monuments Archaeological Survey. It generally covers buildings and structures from the period after 1700. Like archaeology.ie, you can access information on individual sites via an online mapviewer. Each site is represented by a blue dot. When you click on this, you get basic information including a name, date and reference number. There is also a 'View Main Record' link to a detailed description of the site including a photo. The image here is from the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage website and shows part of the record for **Mountbellew Walled Garden, Co. Galway**. The description and appraisal give us a good insight into the history of the walled garden and its former use.

The Schools Folklore Collection (www.duchas.ie)

In the 1930s the Irish Folklore Commission decided to gather folklore and stories across the land. They mobilised 50,000 primary school children in over 5,000 schools for this task. During 1937 and 1938, the pupils gathered folklore of all kinds from their parents, grandparents and neighbours. These were written down in copybooks and are now held in the National Folklore Collection at UCD. There is a huge variety of subject matter in these copybooks including stories about local historical sites, local families, cures and piseoga (superstitions).



Description

Walled garden laid out c.1820, now in use as a deer park. Comprising coursed random rubble limestone walls with rubble copings and segmental-headed cut limestone openings. Former entrance blocked up with random rubble wall and narrow opening at top. Remains of Bellew House to centre of garden. Two-storey gardener's dwelling, c.1820, with pitched slate roof, built into south wall. Detached single-bay single-storey former estate forge, built c.1820, now in use as museum. Pitched slate roof having stone chimneystack to south-west gable, stone copings to gables, and cast-iron rainwater goods. Random rubble walls. Triangular-headed windows to north-west and south-east elevations, with tooled limestone sills, rubble voussoirs, and timber multiple-pane casement windows with decorative metal grill over. Triangular-headed entrance to north-west gable with double-leaf timber door having decorative hinges and rubble voussoirs. Set in gravel car park area adjacent to walled garden. Set at edge of estate road in Mountbellew forest park.

Appraisal

This walled garden, forge and other structures, are physical remainders of the heart of the Mountbellew demesne, once a thriving estate and a driving force of Mountbellew town. Within the walled garden lie the ruins of Bellew House, home to the Bellew family. The estate was taken over in 1937 by the Land Commission and the house destroyed in 1939 to provide stones to fix roads, despite protests from the locals who tried to have the house converted into a district hospital. The house, begun in the eighteenth century, was finished in the early nineteenth century when the walled garden was laid out. The enclosure was designed to grow cucumbers, melons and flowers, amongst other plants, and the remains of a greenhouse, grapery and peach house can be seen. In addition, a gardener's house was built into the very walls of the garden. The Bellew family were very interested in agriculture and founded the Mountbellew Agricultural College with the Franciscans in 1904. The walled garden, along with the adjacent forge, forms an attractive group within Mountbellew estate.

Thanks to a recent digitization project, the scanned copybooks can now be read online. The best place to start is to click the 'Places' tab at the top of the homepage. This brings up a map of Ireland and you can navigate to a school (orange markers) or place of interest (blue markers).

These manuscripts provide a unique insight into how people viewed their lives and localities in the days before mass media and international transport. An interesting story about **Doon Fort in Co. Donegal** appears in the Schools Folklore Collection [here](#). It seems that once upon a time the fort was occupied by a giant and a local man had a close call when he went into the fort one night.

Placenames Database (www.logainm.ie)

Placenames are a source of interest for anyone studying local history and heritage and often can provide clues to local topography, archaeological or ecclesiastical sites and land ownership in the past. Although they can be centuries old, placenames were only standardised in the 19th century by the Ordnance Survey.

The Placenames Database of Ireland is a comprehensive resource that can be accessed online. This website has information on every official placename in Ireland: townlands, parishes, streets, mountains, rivers and many more. Many Irish placenames were anglicised by the Ordnance Survey in the 19th century and their true meaning can only be understood by studying the Irish version.

The website has a page for each individual placename. It gives an Irish translation and in some cases an audio file with the correct

pronunciation. You can use the website's extensive glossary to help decipher the meaning.

To dig deeper, you can study the archival records for each placename; these consist of scanned copies of handwritten index cards and lists of where the placename appears in historic sources and documents.

Heritage Maps (www.heritagemaps.ie)

Heritage Maps is another resource based on an online map viewing platform. It is managed by the Heritage Council of Ireland and is a one-stop-shop for all kinds of heritage information. It includes the NMS and NIAH databases but also details of archaeological finds, Protected Structures and natural heritage. There are also useful tools that allow the user to display administrative boundaries (including townlands), to measure distances and areas and to share maps online.

A very useful function on heritagemaps.ie is the National Museum of Ireland's Finds database. Here you can see the location and basic details of artefacts that have been found over the years. If there are finds near your monument, they may help to broaden the story of the monument and the local area.

Ordnance Survey (www.osi.ie)

The Ordnance Survey of Ireland is the national mapping agency for the country. Their excellent website provides a wealth of resources for local studies. Of particular interest is the Mapviewer. This is simply an online map of Ireland. You can zoom into any area of interest to get detailed information on the locality.

The Mapviewer provides simple access to a range of map types. On the menu on the left hand side, click on 'Base Information and Mapping' to access eight different types of basemap. The Historic 6 inch maps date from the 1830s and 1840s and represent the first detailed mapping of Ireland, they can be viewed in black & white and colour versions. The Historic 25 inch maps were an even more ambitious undertaking in the late 19th and early 20th century and show a fascinating amount of detail.

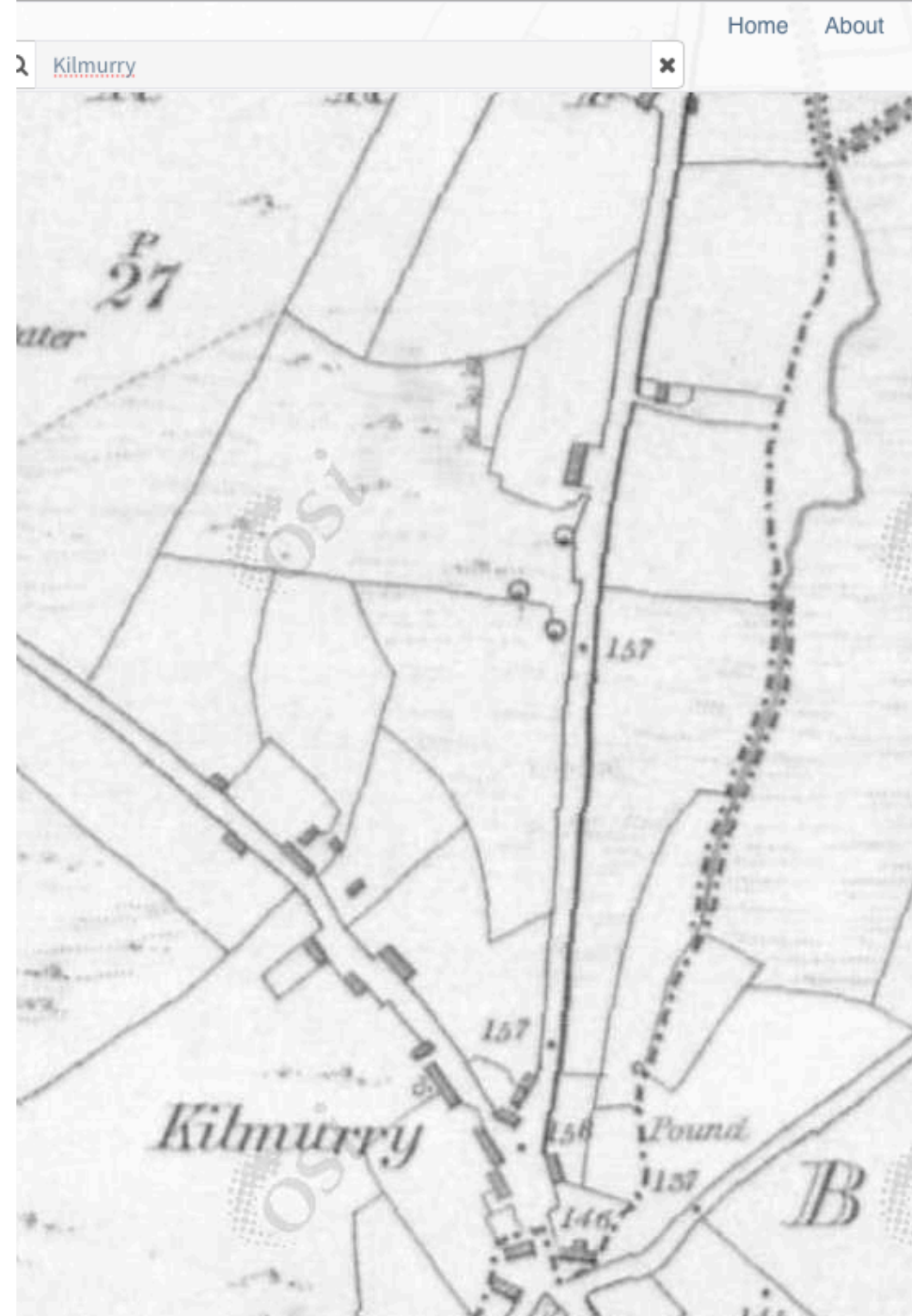
A very useful feature of the mapviewer is the slider. You can turn on two or more layers simultaneously and change the transparency of the top layer. Using the mapviewer in this way, you can compare what is depicted on two different maps and see how your area has changed over the past two centuries

OSI map screenshot, Kilmurry Lime Kiln, Co. Clare

This extract from the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, taken from www.osi.ie, shows Kilmurry Lime Kiln in the centre of the map to the north of the village. In fact, we can see that there were three lime kilns here in close proximity at the time, each represented by a small circle.

Ordnance Survey Letters

The Ordnance Survey Letters were written when the 6 inch maps were being produced, under the supervision of two scholars, John O' Donovan and Eugene O' Curry.



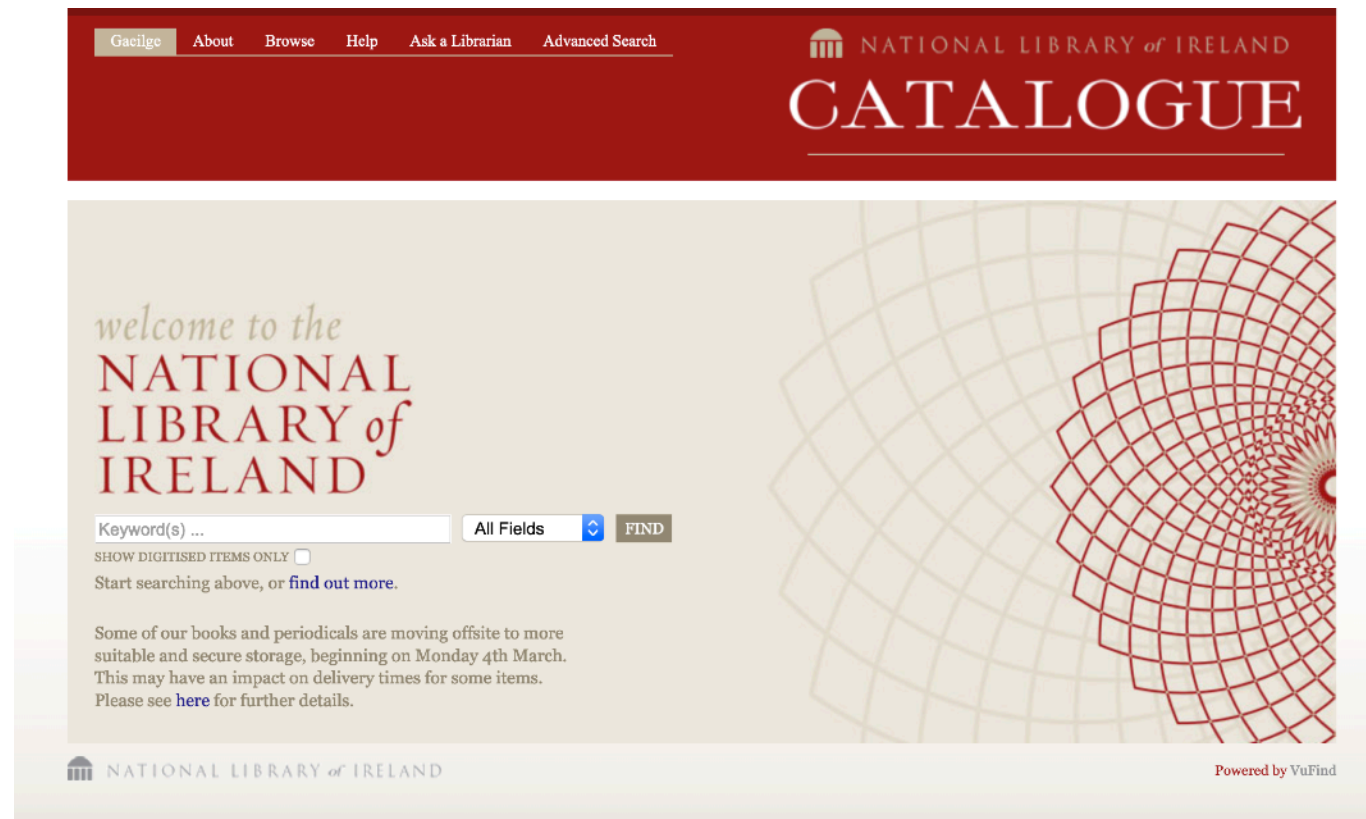
OSI Map, Kilmurry Lime Kiln, Co. Clare

They contain notes and observations compiled on a parish-by-parish basis. There are descriptions of local antiquities and monuments, associated history and folklore, along with sketches in some instances.

The OS Letters can provide an insight into the condition of monuments at that time, before modernisation and intensive farming practices. In the 1930s and 1940s, the first printed copies of the OS Letters were edited and published by Fr. Michael O' Flanagan. Some county libraries have made electronic copies of these OS Letters for their counties available online or in soft copy. Scanned copies of the original handwritten OS Letters are available on the AskAboutIreland.ie website.

Down Survey maps & 1641 Depositions

For an earlier cartographic perspective, you can also look at the 17th century Down Survey maps online. These maps were drawn after the Cromwellian Conquest. Thanks to a project conducted by Trinity College Dublin, they can be viewed at downsurvey.tcd.ie. Although not as detailed as later maps, they do show placenames, settlements, castles and churches. County, barony and some parish maps can be viewed. You can also research land



National Library of Ireland website (catalogue.nli.ie).

ownership in the 17th century using this website.

Another very interesting project conducted by Trinity College that is now available to view online is the 1641 Depositions 1641.tcd.ie. These are witness testimonies mainly by Protestants, but also by some Catholics, from all social backgrounds, concerning their experiences of the 1641 Irish rebellion. This database provides a unique insight into the

social, economic, cultural, religious, and political history of Ireland, England and Scotland in the seventeenth century.

National Library of Ireland (www.nli.ie)

The National Library of Ireland has digitised some of its vast collection. You can browse or search the collection on the NLI catalogue (catalogue.nli.ie).

Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland

The National Library of Ireland holds a vast array of material of Irish interest. The Lawrence Photographic Collection is undoubtedly one of their most absorbing collections. It contains over 36,000 photographs taken between 1860 and 1920 across Ireland. You can find photographs of many antiquities and monuments in this collection. Many of the photographs have been digitised and can be viewed online.

To access the collection, go to catalogue.nli.ie and search for 'Lawrence Photograph Collection'. When you click into the collection, you can filter the photographs by location, subject and date. You can also click on a thumbnail image to view it in larger size.

A photograph in the Lawrence Collection shows a general view of Killeshandra. Zoom in to the right centre of the photograph where you can just about make out the **Church of the Rath**, Co. Cavan, one of the Adopt a Monument sites, hidden behind tall trees.

www.excavations.ie

Archaeological excavations can give new and exciting insights into our past. You can access summaries of reports by archaeologists on Irish excavations on excavations.ie. Over 23,000 reports dating from after 1970 are currently available.

The easiest way to access them is to use the interactive map, zoom in to the location you are interested in and click on the blue icon and then click 'view report' to bring up a page with a summary report.

Published sources

In the digital age, the distinction between online and conventional published sources is no longer clearcut. By published sources, we mean books, journals, newspapers and other printed material. As we have already seen, a lot of printed material from the past has been digitised and is now available online.

Google Books and websites such as www.archive.org have digitised many older texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries where copyright has expired. This includes numerous historical works. While some of these old works can be useful, they should be viewed with a critical eye as much has been learned since they were published and their findings may not be as up to date with modern research.

JSTOR (www.jstor.org) is an online repository of academic journals. Although the modern journals can be costly to access, some older journals, including those dealing with history, archaeology and heritage, can be read online for free.

CELT

Irish historic manuscripts, such as the ancient Annals and the Lives of the Saints, often contain references to historic sites and places. While these references are often brief, they give details of the history of a site or people associated with it. CELT (Corpus of Electronic Texts) is a project of the Departments of History and Computer Science, University College Cork. It is an online text database that provides free access to a wide variety of Irish manuscript sources in electronic format. There are over 1,500

documents available covering the period from prehistoric Ireland right up to the 20th century. Some documents are in their original languages, including Irish, Latin and French.

Rather than browsing through the vast amount of resources on the site, you can make best use of CELT if you already have some indication of what you are looking for, like a date for references in the Annals or a particular document, such as the life of a saint associated with a monument.

Visit celt.ucc.ie to access the collection.

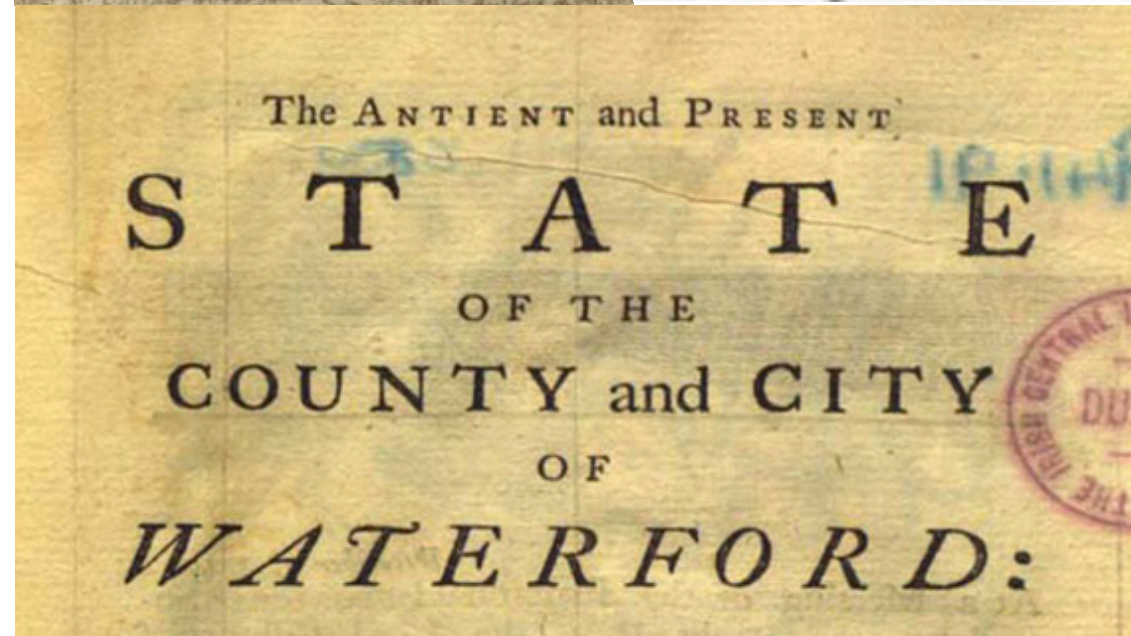
Ask About Ireland

Ask About Ireland, a collaboration between Ireland's public libraries, has a wide selection of e-books in their online reading room. You can browse the e-books by subject or by county. The reading room contains rare and out of print books, many from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Of particular interest are the volumes of the Civil Survey, a detailed survey of land ownership in the mid 1600s.

The Antient and Present State of the County and City of Waterford by Charles Smith was published in 1746 and is available in the online reading room. This book contains a reference to **Gallows Hill, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford**, one of the Adopt a Monument sites, including an account of the author's efforts to bore into the top of the mound.



OSI historic map of Ballyogan Moated Site, Brandon Hill, Co.



Local historical and archaeological journals

There are many historical and archaeological journals published in Ireland. Some are academic journals, some are published by dedicated amateur societies, while some are a combination of both. Their focus ranges from local to county, regional and national level. Most are published annually or in some cases more often.

A website maintained by Thaddeus Breen lists the main historical and archaeological journals in Ireland at national and local level. The list can be accessed at <https://tbreen.home.xs4all.nl/journals.html>. The list has been revised and updated within the past year and includes links where journals have an online presence. There is a general list of national-level journals and a list of local journals organised by county.

In some limited cases, full journal articles are available to read online. In most cases, however, you can just browse or search the list of articles or contents, including back issues of the journal. This can be very useful for identifying previous research and publications related to your monument.



heritagemaps.ie

Aerial photographs

As well as having a range of Ordnance Survey maps from the nineteenth century, archaeology.ie and osi.ie also have a number of aerial photographic surveys. These are vertical aerial photographs and show how monuments look in the modern landscape. During hot summers, for example 1995 and 2018, crop marks may

also be visible which show below-ground remains of archaeological sites. Google Earth also provides a useful range of satellite imagery that helps build up a picture of the landscape. Remember to try the Time Slider function when using Google Earth as this shows different versions of satellite images.

[Home](#) / [Department of Geography](#) / [Cambridge air photos](#) / [Aerial photos from around the UK and beyond](#)

Cambridge air photos

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The Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography (CUCAP) is the result of airborne survey campaigns which were started in 1945. Over the years the collection has grown to almost 500,000 images of obliques and verticals in black and white, colour and infra-red. Virtually the whole of the UK is covered, depicting a wide variety of landscapes and features and the verticals being of survey quality, can be used in mapping projects.

Some of the uses of CUCAP images include archaeology, geology, social history, law (land/border disputes), environmental issues (coastal erosion) and planning.

Browse the map

Browse 450,000+ clickable locations.

Featured images

Explore some of the very best images

Another type of aerial resource is an oblique photograph, i.e. an aerial photo shot from an angle. There are several good online resources available with Irish content such as:

- ▶ **The Cambridge University Collection:** cambridgeairphotos.com/map/
- ▶ **Britain from Above:** britainfromabove.org.uk/en (select Map)
- ▶ **The Leo Swan Aerial Photographic Archive:** lswanaerial.locloudhosting.net/items/browse

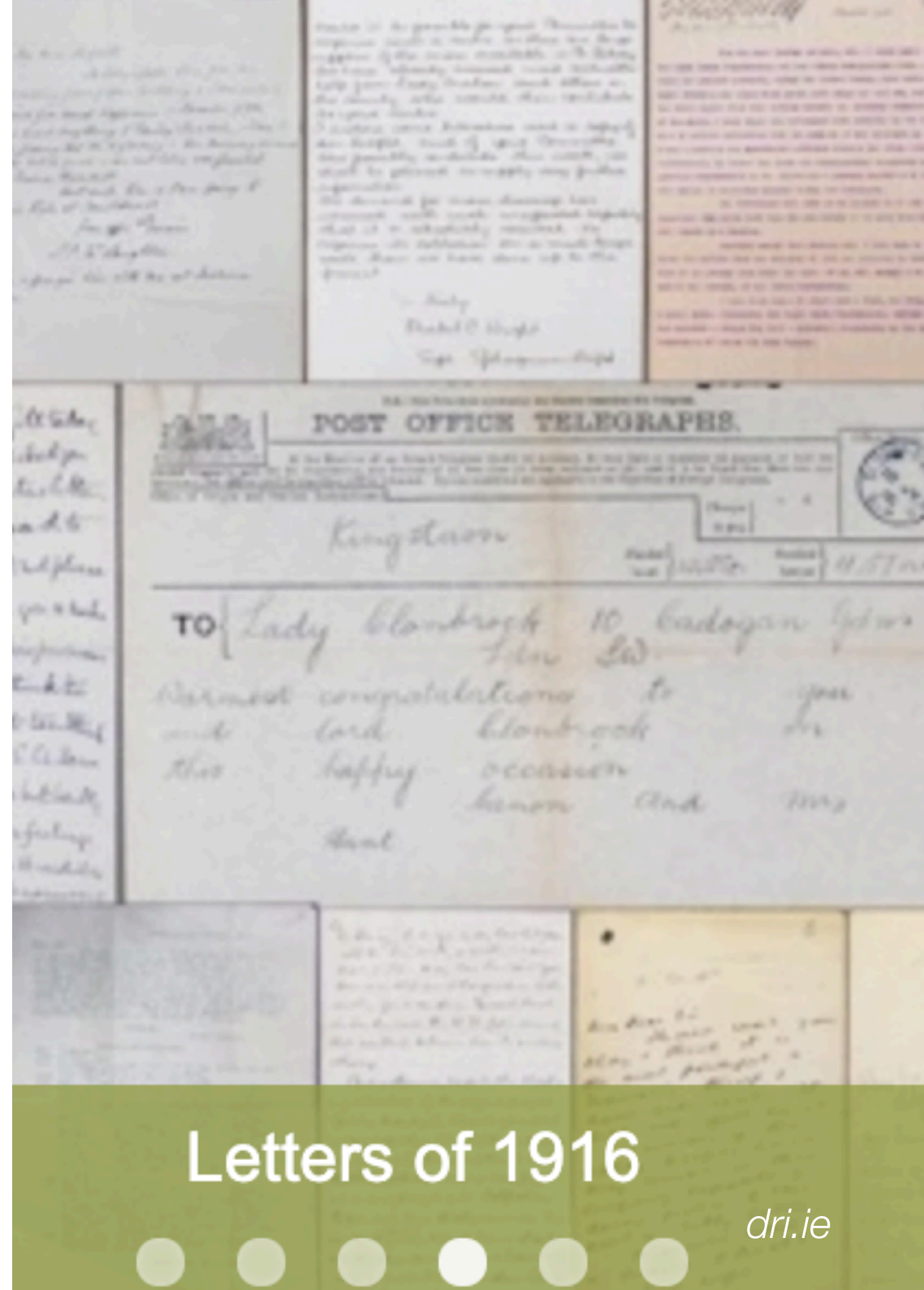


Oblique aerial photograph of Lucan from the Leo Swan Collection

List of other useful websites

In addition to the above, there are many websites run by other state agencies, specialists and enthusiasts that give great insights into our heritage. Here are some useful links:

- ▶ abartaheritage.ie
- ▶ digitalheritageage.com
- ▶ dri.ie (Digital Repository of Ireland)
- ▶ heritagecouncil.ie
- ▶ historicgraves.com
- ▶ historyireland.com
- ▶ irisharchaeology.ie
- ▶ irishgenealogy.ie
- ▶ irishhighcrosses.com
- ▶ johnngrenham.com
- ▶ megalithicireland.com
- ▶ ria.ie (Royal Irish Academy)
- ▶ saintsandstones.net
- ▶ voicesfromthedawn.com



Further details on Adopt a Monument Ireland can be found at:

www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/adopt-a-monument

and in the publication: Guidance for Community Archaeology Projects.

We hope that these sources and tips will help you research and enjoy the historic landscape that we all live in.

Take care.



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

