



TENTATIVE LIST SUBMISSION FORMAT



**STATE PARTY: Ireland**

**Submission prepared by:**

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**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Early Medieval Monastic Sites:

**State, Province or Region:** County Offaly (Clonmacnoise and Durrow), County Wicklow (Glendalough), County Clare (Inis Cealtra), County Meath (Kells), County Louth (Monasterboice)

Latitude and Longitude:

53° 19' 40.0008" North; 7° 58' 42.999" West (Clonmacnoise),

53° 16' 22.0794" North; 7° 48' 0.72" West (Durrow),

53° 0' 37.4394" North; 6° 17' 25.4394" West (Glendalough),

52° 48' 46.08" North; 8° 26' 34.7994" West (Inis Cealtra),

53° 43' 32.8794" North; 6° 52' 45.1194" West (Kells),

53° 46' 48.3594" North; 6° 24' 11.52" West (Monasterboice).

**DESCRIPTION:**

The sites chosen are a representative sample of Early Medieval Monastic sites in Ireland, which embody the Celtic Church's rich cultural and historical past, playing a crucial role in Europe's educational and artistic development.

**Justification of Outstanding Universal Value:**

(Preliminary identification of the values of the property which merit inscription on the World Heritage List)

The six Early Medieval Monastic Sites chosen are the epitome of the Early Medieval Monastic Cities which derived their unique settlement patterns from the major sites of pre-Christian Celtic Ireland which themselves developed over the several centuries of the Iron Age. During these first centuries of the first millennium AD Britain and Western Europe fell into the orbit of the Roman Empire and

the Christian Church, influences which Ireland largely escaped until the 5th century. The properties nominated are amongst the principal examples of centres of Celtic learning, teaching and enlightenment.

**Criteria met** [see Paragraph 77 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

(Please tick the box corresponding to the proposed criteria and justify the use of each below)

***Criterion (iii): Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;***

The cultural tradition was unique. The enclosure form of the monastic settlements is a direct development of pagan antecedents deriving from the Iron Age, without the influence of the Roman Empire, suggesting a unique planning system lasting for over a millennium. The ritual centres of the enclosures have sculptural and architectural artifacts which are the manifestations in stone of earlier art forms in timber, metalwork, and illuminated manuscripts, which themselves have influences from early Christian and pagan sources singular to Ireland.

The settlements were proto-urban monastic cities with large religious and secular populations of teachers, scholars and artists, industrial and agricultural inhabitants. For a time the Irish monks were the only educators in Early Medieval Europe, and voluntary exile was the chosen path of many of the early missionaries. St. Columba, a prince of the powerful Ui Neill dynasty, left Ireland to found over sixty monasteries in Scotland, northern England and France. These clerics fanned out over Europe, as far as Kiev in the Ukraine, founding monasteries, which developed into cities such as Auxerre, Laon, Liege, Trier, Wurzburg, Salzburg, Vienna, and Regensburg.

***Criterion (iv): Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;***

The layout and architecture of the monasteries and the artefacts within them are distinctive to Early Christian Ireland. The sites illustrate the transition from Irish Paganism to Christianity and were centres of education in early Medieval Europe following the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

The concept of the enclosure was fundamental to these monastic institutions. They follow a recognizable pattern of considerable area, usually between 15 and 20 hectares for the greater foundations such as Clonmacnoise or Durrow, and are similar to the ring forts for the period, but the true extent of the land holdings and the outlying buildings is much greater and is part of the monastic city. These outer remains can now be located with improved technology (which will itself undoubtedly improve further with time) and the importance of the areas outside the nucleus is being accepted. The majority of architectural remains are within the nucleus of the enclosure, which has the form of a ritual sanctuary.

The iconic symbols of Irish Christianity are the High Cross and the Round Tower. The sculptured High Crosses form a body of stone-based art unsurpassed in Europe. Examples of the most acclaimed group, which may have been the work of one master sculptor, are present at Clonmacnoise, Durrow and Monasterboice. The Round Towers are freestanding stone symbols, averaging 30m high, which are without an equivalent in Europe. Of the six properties, only Durrow has no evident tower. While the artefacts fall into distinct groups, like the enclosures, they follow the same genetic trend across the entire Early Monastic genre.

These built works have been described as the forgotten Golden Age of European Architecture.

***Criterion (vi): The site should be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.***

(The WH Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

The monasteries were centres of artistic endeavor, which produced idiosyncratic forms of metalwork, illustrated manuscripts and sculpture. These were rooted in the pre-Christian pagan tradition and are accepted as supreme examples of Western European Art. While many examples of the illuminated manuscripts were lost during the centuries of Viking raiding an exemplar, which is associated with the nominated site of Durrow, is the Book of Durrow, which is in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

**Statements of authenticity and/or integrity** [see Paragraphs 78-95 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

*Authenticity:*

The authenticity of these 6 properties as monastic cities founded in the 6th and 7th centuries AD is attested in form and design, material and substance, location and setting and spirit and feeling. Their histories have been researched by eminent scholars back to their foundations in the 6th century.

*Integrity:*

The integrity of all 6 properties can be examined visually and physically and experienced with the senses as suggested in paragraph 88 of the Revised Operational Guidelines, and expressed in the Criteria of Outstanding Universal Value. They are of adequate size and five are situated in pastoral settings without significant immediate development.

**Comparison with other similar properties:**

(The comparison should outline similarities with other properties on the World Heritage List or not, and the reasons that make the property stand out)

The Early Celtic Monastic Society evolved from the mingling of the indigenous pagan cultural, social and legal systems with those of Western European Christianity. This latter system declined while the Celtic system developed and prospered leading to a reversal of learning before and during the Carolingian Empire. This theme of the cross fertilization of scholarship is in the process of continual study and development, and its expression in the relationships between Ireland and Western Europe seems uniquely expressed by the two social cultures. This legacy is experienced in the physical presence of the monastic centers of learning, which remain in Europe and in Ireland as presented in this proposal.

***Skellig Michael: Ireland***

An isolated monastic complex, perched on an island in the Atlantic, difficult to ascend, and at times cut off from all human contact for weeks on end by weather conditions, this site embodies the most extreme characteristics of early Christian eremitical asceticism.

*Principal differences to Early Medieval Monastic Sites:*

- It demonstrates eremitic monasticism
- It is non-congregational
- It had no national symbolic value in the medieval period
- It is situated on an island
- It is nominated as a group of buildings rather than as a cultural landscape
- It lacks the architectural and artistic wealth evidenced at the other properties

***Saint Catherine, Sinai: Egypt***

This site is inscribed for its landscape setting, sacred to three religions, and for the significance of the buildings, and their collections, to the study of Byzantine art and architecture. It is one of the earliest examples of an ascetic monastic site to survive in a state of preservation to the current day.

*Principal differences to Early Medieval Monastic Sites:*

- The chronological time frame is different
- Its societal role as an enclosed community difficult to access depicts ascetic monasticism
- It has an Eastern architectural tradition

### ***Early Christian Necropolis of Pécs: Hungary***

This is a remarkable complex of early Christian tombs, dating to the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Originally the cemetery of the provincial Roman town of Sopianae, the modern town of Pécs developed not around the ancient city, but around its cemetery. This is indicative of the importance of the cult of the dead in early Christian Europe. The architecture and ornament of these tombs make them a significant example of commemorative art of the early Christian period.

### ***Principal differences to Early Medieval Monastic Sites:***

- Its chronology is 4<sup>th</sup> century.
- There is a uniformity of purpose: confined to burial and commemoration.
- It depicts part of a mutating tradition of architecture and art which nevertheless was still uniformly based on Roman precedents.

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The Tentative List submission format is available from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>

- Further guidance on the preparation of Tentative Lists can be found in Paragraphs 62-67 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
- An example of a completed Tentative List submission format can be found at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- All Tentative Lists submitted by States Parties are available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- The original signed version of the completed Tentative List submission format should be sent in English or French to: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
- States Parties are encouraged to also submit this information in electronic format (diskette or CD-Rom) or by e-mail to [wh-tentativelists@unesco.org](mailto:wh-tentativelists@unesco.org)