

Ireland's 1992 Tentative List

Ireland's 1992 Tentative Site List of Properties for possible future nomination to UNESCO's World Heritage List

The following tentative list for Ireland was compiled by an internal Departmental committee in light of an advertised public consultation process:

Tentative List (1992)

Cultural

- (I) The Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne- inscribed in 1993
- (II) Skellig Michael- inscribed in 1996
- (III) Western Stone Forts
- (IV) Cashel

Natural

- (I) Killarney National Park
- (II) North West Mayo Boglands
- (III) Clara Bog

Mixed- Cultural and Natural

- (I) Clonmacnoise
- (II) Burren
- (III) Ceide Fields

Description and Justification of sites on the Tentative List

Cultural Sites

(III) Western Stone Forts

There are up to forty large stone forts spread in various forms and location throughout the western counties of Ireland. These forts span a period from the Bronze Age through to the Medieval Period. One of the most magnificent and dramatic examples of a stone fort in Europe is Dun Aonghusa, perched on a cliff edge, in Inis Mor island, on the westernmost extremity of Europe.

These forts represent a style of construction that is different to stone forts from other parts of Europe, that of dry-stone construction, with massive walls of large quarried blocks of stone, a testimony to the master masons of Ireland. The forts vary from a single to triple enclosure with a variety of associated structures and field systems. The survival of such high numbers of these monuments provides a unique opportunity for archaeological investigation into a rich and vibrant society that counts among the finest in Europe.



(IV) Cashel

The Rock of Cashel is a complex of secular and religious structures of national and international importance and significant historical and religious events dramatically situated high above the surrounding plain.

The history of the complex spans from the 4th century AD, when the Rock of Cashel was home to the Kings of Munster to the Confederate wars of the 17th century. The buildings include a 12th century Romanesque chapel, St. Cormac's Chapel, and cathedral, a round tower, choral hall and castle and outside the castle, a carved cross. St. Cormac's chapel, built in 1127, highlights the significant influences that resulted from the tradition of travelling ecclesiastics throughout Europe and beyond. It incorporates German and English architectural influence in particular along with Scandinavian decorative influences.



Natural Sites

(I) Killarney National Park

Killarney national park covers an area of 10,129 hectares and is of international scientific importance including features such as oceanic woodlands of oak, unique yew woodland and varied wet floodlands. There are numerous species of flora and fauna including several plants with unusual discontinuous distributions in Western Europe. A herd of red deer inhabiting the park is the only indigenous wild herd of deer remaining in the country.

The park is an area of outstanding natural beauty and includes three large lakes, part of the highest mountain range in Ireland, woods, waterfalls and various archaeological monuments. The park is centred around Muckross House, dating back to 1843, and which is now used as a visitor centre and museum.

Occupation of the area dates back to the Bronze age, with copper mines surviving from this period. Another important era is the Early Christian period when the island of Inishfallen became home to the monks of St Fionan, who were responsible for the “Annals of Innisfallen”, a major source of information on the early history of Ireland.



(II) North West Mayo Boglands

The blanket boglands of North West Mayo comprise three main areas of bog i.e. Owenduff, Owenboy and Glenamoy and as a whole form an area of great scientific interest.

Owenduff bog, centred on the Owenduff River catchment, preserved the largest remaining river system in the country without human habitation at all but its lowest reaches. It is along with Glenamoy, which is an exposed maritime site, an excellent example of a peatland complex with extensive tracts of Atlantic bog vegetation with pool systems grading uninterrupted into wet heath and mountain blanket bog, with associated cliffs, lakes and streams. Glenamoy indeed was the Irish Study site of the International Biological programme.

North West Mayo boglands is an area of great wilderness and natural beauty and is one of the few remaining intact boglands in Europe to be preserved to such a degree.



Ballycroy National Park, Co. Mayo

(III) Clara Bog

Clara bog, which covers an area of 665 hectares, is the largest remaining true midland raised bog. An area of 465 hectares has been declared a Natural Heritage Reserve. The bog is bounded by glacial esker ridge to the North and to the south by a cut-away bog. The surface topography is undulating with the peat reaching depths of 10m in places. Extensive parts of the bog have vegetation typical of raised bogs with well developed complexes of hummocks and hollows and lawns of sphaga. A few dry, calluna-dominated ridges also occur. Much scientific research has been carried out in the area into aspects of the geology, hydrology and ecology of the bog.

Its most outstanding feature is the series of soaks which may be fed by springs seeping up through the peat with the esker ridge acting as a pressure head. These soak complexes are the best remaining examples in Ireland and is a now rare phenomenon throughout Northern Europe. The bog also contains many specimens of rare bog plants.

Mixed- Cultural and Natural

(I) Clonmacnoise

Clonmacnoise is an area of both natural and cultural significance which is located alongside the River Shannon, the largest river in Ireland and Britain.

The cultural remains consist of an ecclesiastic foundation. A monastery was founded in 548-9 by St. Ciaran. The remains of eight religious buildings survive representing various styles of architecture spanning the period from the 10th to 17th centuries. Two highly decorated 9th and 10th century stone crosses survive which represent an artistic achievement of universal significance and a tradition which is uniquely Irish. Fine examples of ornately carved grave slabs spanning 8th and 12th centuries also survive.

The area of Clonmacnoise preserves a rich and varied natural environment. This includes a glacier landscape of eskers, semi-natural woodlands and large extracts of boglands and the river callows. These features all support a variety of plant and animal life, including many rare species

The River Shannon a major component of the property, is the last remaining undrained river in Europe and as such preserves and increasingly rare natural riverrine environment. Mongan bog, a National Nature Reserve, remains virtually intact and is one of the few raised bogs left in Western Europe.



(II) The Burren

The Burren is a unique area of universal significance in relation to both natural and cultural phenomena. The Burren is an area of limestone karstland characterised by terraced hills of bare limestone with a well developed underground system of caves. It is one of the few limestone regions on the European Atlantic coast with the unusual climatic conditions that this entails, and is the only karstland to be found on the extreme fringes of north-west Europe.

The environment supports a rich variety of rare plants and insects, with distinctive flora of widely differing habitats. A mixture of Mediterranean, Arctic and Alpine plants are to be found growing together in the Burren which is a phenomenon found nowhere else in the world.

A huge number of archaeological sites from the Mesolithic period on are preserved in this area. In particular, the wealth of monuments from the prehistoric and Early Christian periods is unsurpassed.



(III) Céide Fields

Céide Fields, situated on the North Coastal region of County Mayo, is a fossilized Neolithic landscape which has been preserved beneath an expanse of blanket bog.

This landscape consists of extensive tracts of land enclosed by stone walls, a landscape which was formally laid out on a predetermined and organised basis. Associated with these field systems is a wealth of megalithic tombs and farmsteads. The natural boglands and the rare geographical formations make this a unique cultural and natural landscape.

Preserved beneath this bogland is a unique cultural landscape, along with fossilized natural woodland. To date a continuous Neolithic landscape of over 2,500 acres has been mapped. This makes Céide Fields the most extensive Stone Age monument in the world.

