

Archaeological Survey,
Killahan Graveyard,
Tonaknock,
Abbeydorney,
Co. Kerry.



March 2012

Client: The Heritage Office,
Kerry County Council,
County Buildings,
Ratass,
Tralee,
Co. Kerry.

RMP No.: KE015-108

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Townland: Tonaknock

Parish: Killahan

Barony: Clanmaurice

Local name of graveyard: Killahan

ITM Co-ords: E484474, N627051

RMP No.: KE015-108

No. of tombs: 3

No. of named headstones: 15

No. of lintelled graves: 1

High Stone Cross: 1

1. Introduction

Killahan church and graveyard were surveyed using a Magellan ProMark 3 Rover and Base station and presented in Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM). The GPS graveyard survey datasets were exported using Hangle software from GPS Ireland and then exported into AutoCAD and finished using Adobe Illustrator. Reference numbers mentioned in the main body of the report relate to the ID point given when the survey was undertaken (see A3 plan Figure 2 below). A digital photographic record and surname database was also compiled to complement the cartographic survey (see appendices). Digital photographs of the features within the graveyard are referenced in the appendix and all photographs are provided on the attached disc.

The survey was undertaken as per the tender survey criteria set out by the Heritage Section of Kerry County Council, (KCC) and further, with due regard to:

- Conservation principles as produced by ICOMOS in the Venice and Burra Charters
- The publication in 2004 of the Architectural Heritage Protection-Guidelines for Planners by the DoEHLG, (now DAHG)
- The heritage objectives as outlined and adopted in the current Kerry County Council Development Plan 2009-2015, Built Heritage (Chapter 10)

The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe was signed at the Granada Convention in 1985 and ratified by Ireland in 1997. The conservation aims as stated in the Burra Charter are for the retention or restoration of historical significance with the minimum of physical intervention and that such intervention work be reversible, maintain the structure's character and setting and that all conservation works should be undertaken following comprehensive research.

An information booklet on care and maintenance for tombs should be compiled and supplied to the relevant parish church.

All of these graveyards are recorded monuments protected under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 and under the jurisdiction of Kerry County Council. All proposed works should be carried out by experience competent personnel under expert archaeological / architectural guidance and supervision. As these sites are recorded monuments conservation and restoration works can only be carried out under license from the National Monuments Service of the Dept. of Environment, Heritage and Local Gov.

2. Site Location

Killahan church and graveyard is situated on low reclaimed marshy ground in the townland of Tonaknock 3km NW of the village of Abbeydorney and *circa* 10 km NE of Ardfert (Figures 1-2 & Plate 1).

3. General

The ecclesiastical complex of Killahan- *Cill Fhlaithín*, is named after an early, possibly 7th century saint, St. Flaithin, (Ó Ciobháin in Toal 1996, 322). However, the saints name is also given by other scholars as St. Liathin, (O'Donovan 1983, 49; Tarrant & O'Connell 1990, 180; Toal 1996,). The site is recorded in the Record of Monuments & Places, (RMP), KE015-108.

Opposite the roadside entrance to the graveyard is an early high stone cross, 3.5m tall and with a broken width of 0.65m and 0.33m in thickness (Figure 2 & Plate 2). The weathered limestone high cross, has one of its wedge shaped arms broken, was originally found buried in a nearby field and re-erected in its present position by the Commissioners of Public Works. When O'Donovan, (1983, 49), surveyed the site he recorded that the whole cross was white washed.

The four angles created by the crossing of the arms of the cross have been pronouncedly rounded - a feature similar to other examples found in Kerry, e.g. Killelton, near Castlegregory.

On the back or west face of the cross are six circular incised motifs two on the surviving arm and four on the shaft starting at the crossing point and descending. It appears that the two on the arm are also connected by a single line, (Plate 3). Toal and Tarrant & O'Connell suggest that they may stylistically represent the figure of Christ and the 'sacred host', (Tarrant & O'Connell 1990, 181; Toal 1996, 225).

Apart from the high cross no other monumental or artefactual vestige of the early medieval ecclesiastic site remains. Examination of the 1st Edition of the OS 6" map of 1841 denote a sub-rectangular un-enclosed graveyard, (demarcated by a broken dotted line) with the ruins of the church forming the NE corner with the Glebe House and lands more

or less abutting the S limits of the site. The location of the Stone Cross is also clearly denoted just inside the field near the roadside (Figure 3).

Examination of the 25" OS map of 1896-7 denotes the graveyard as a dotted line somewhat squarer and with rounded corners but still unenclosed. The long rectangular church is denoted as in ruins. The Glebe is no longer mapped but the Stone Cross is clearly marked in the same location as 1841, (Figure 4).

Today the spartan graveyard is dominated by the upstanding, generally well preserved, walls of a high medieval parish church, a small scatter of modern headstones, three tombs and a recent modern grotto (Figure 2 & Plates 1 & 4)

4. Church and graveyard

The ruined parish church of Killahan is eccentrically disposed close to the N boundary wall within an open grass covered graveyard that is virtually devoid of gravemarkers, trees or bushes (Figure 2 & Plates 1 & 4). Ivy has established itself on a section of the S elevation NE corner and W gable as well. The graveyard is enclosed by a uncoursed rubble stone wall in general good order, (see Boundaries below). It contains a three tombs and fifteen named headstones. The graveyard is covered by a dense sward of grass-however it is evident that the grass is maintained.

The rectangular parish church measures, 21.95m x 6.8m externally and an average external wall thickness of 0.90m. Internally the church was divided in a 2:1 ratio between nave and choir separated by a party wall, 0.60m in thickness and which still partially survives, (Figure 2 & Plate 14). There is physical evidence for two windows in the choir section on the S and N elevations both of which are blocked up. The most coherent remains is evident on the S elevation and comprises of a four chamfered sandstones making up part of one side of the window (Plates 5 & 14). Interestingly, when O'Donovan surveyed the church in 1841 the S window was exactly the same and he remarked at the time the one side of the E window also survived and that both were the same kind (O'Donovan, 1983, 49). The less conspicuous remains of the window on the N elevation comprises the splayed ingoings of one side as well a vertically disposed straight sided stone opposite, 1.1m apart. The possible window is situated 0.5m E of the party wall between choir and

nave (Figure 2 & Plate 6).

Another blocked up architectural feature comprises two short seam joints that may reflect the sides of an intra mural cupboard or aumbry situated on the S elevation of the choir and 0.60m from the party wall, (Figure 2 & Plate 7).

The church is constructed with uncoursed rubble masonry of local limestone and a scatter of sandstone, bedded in lime mortar. Some of the stones are quite massive and are especially evident in the nave, (Plate 8). John O'Donovan recorded that all of the west gable and 50% of the E gable was destroyed to foundation with a breach in the middle of the N elevation down to 0.90m, (*ibid*). In 1995 Toal surveyed the site and recorded that the E gable was gone as well as a section of the N elevation where it abuts the W gable (Toal 1996, 248). Today both these structural breaches have been poorly blocked up, (Plates 9-10).

Sometime after 1995 and possibly in the last five years the church was poorly 'repaired', and the graveyard cleaned. Unfortunately, however there appears to be no record of the works that were done.

5. Approach and parking

Killahan is approached along a straight section of a third class road from Abbeydorney / Ardfert with a difficult 90° turn. There is no carpark or turning area. Funeral corteges must reverse in or out, (Figure 2 & Plate 11).

6. Entrance

Entrance into the graveyard is through a pair of modern galvanised gates pivoting between two square rubble limestone piers that are surmounted by wrought iron crosses. The gateway is slightly set back from the verge of the road. There is no pedestrian stile, (Figure 2 & Plates 2 & 11). Upon passing through the roadside gates, a straight narrow overgrown gravelled track, walled on both sides, leads directly into the walled graveyard.

6.1 Recommendations

Although the graveyard is obviously not much used today, the entranceway should be re-modelled for practical and H & S considerations. A minimum turning area could be provided as well as a pedestrian stile.

7. Services & Signage

There are no water or waste collection services provided.

7.1 Recommendations

Given the infrequency of use at Killahan, visitors, patrons should bring their own water and remove their own rubbish.

8. Boundaries

The graveyard and church are enclosed by an uncoursed rubble limestone walls with 'soldier' capping to a general height of 1.0m- 1.2m. Ivy is now prominent at the E boundary in particular but also evident at the SE corner, SW and part of the N boundary wall as well. The walls have no breaches and are in general good repair however a section of the S boundary along the narrow trackway has partially tumbled on the outside and is also badly bulging. (Figure 2 & Plates 12 & 13).

8.1 Recommendations

The ivy should be removed or severely cut-back before it gets fully established.

The partial breach in the wall along the trackway should be repaired by a tradesperson skilled in rubble stone and mortar walls.

9. Pathways

There is a formal gravelled path extending around nearly all the graveyard interior perimeter. The path gravelled path is now nearly covered in grass due to lack of use. There are no desire lines.(Figure 2 & Plate 12).

9.1 Recommendations

The graveyard is little used but the grass on the pathway could be removed and kept down by including its care into the grass cutting and maintenance regime by KCC.

10. Tombs

There are three tombs, two of which are constructed against the remains of the dividing wall between nave and choir and separated by three steps. The tombs, in effect, raise the height of the interior of the church at the chancel end. The third tomb is free standing in the graveyard and is poorly constructed with a miss-match of rubble that is partially collapsing the SE & SW corners. All three are unnamed, uninscribed and devoid of any dressed stone or graveyard iconography of any kind, (Figure 2 & Plates 14 & 15).

10.1 Recommendations

The third tomb situated in the graveyard should be properly repaired by an experienced person skilled in working with rubble stone and mortar.

11. Named Headstones

A total of fifteen, (15) named and generally modern headstones (HN) were recorded (Figure 2). All headstones are in good order and legible. The earliest date recorded was 1935 with the surname Long, a surname which appears to prevail in the graveyard. A single small child's grave in memory of babies Mary & Joan O'Callaghan is situated on its own mid way along the S limits of the graveyard .

None of the headstones were inscribed in Irish.

11.1 Recommendations

No recommendations necessary

12. Lintelled grave

A single lintel covered grave is visible within the chancel area of the church beside the N elevation. One of the lintels has become dislodged and two others are now partially exposed beneath a thin covering of gravel and black plastic, (Figure 2 & Plate 14).

12.1 Recommendations

The lintelled grave should be repaired and recovered.

13. Summary of recommendations for future management/conservation of Rattoo church & graveyard

- The ivy now re-establishing itself on the boundary walls should be severely cut back or removed before it becomes pervasive.
- The partial breach in the stone boundary wall along the accessway should be repaired.
- An all weather information board similar to one already existing at Killury graveyard, in Lissycurrag townland near Causeway, should be established at a suitable location at the graveyard, most likely beside the entrance gate on its interior.
- *The Care and Conservation of Graveyards*, a publication from The Office of Public Works (OPW) is recommended reading for future maintenance of the church and graveyard.
- An informative booklet on Rattoo should be compiled by Kerry County Council / NMS / OPW and available locally. It should include helpful tips for parishioners on caring for the graveyard, and the individual plots, as well as giving advice about works which may professional services such as the cleaning of old headstones etc.
- Apart from observations noted above in the recording of burials within the up-standing relict remains of Rattoo, no formal recommendations were deemed necessary to Kerry County Council as the site is a National Monument in State ownership and care

Note on Recommendations

All recommendations as set out above are recommendations only based on visual site fieldwork undertaken by the writer. No invasive or other intervention work was undertaken in the course of producing this report. Access into the surviving church tower was not possible as the entrance was boarded up. Ultimately, no responsibility will be accepted by the writer with regard to the undertaking of the conservation work as recommended in this report and based only on visual inspection. The ultimate decision on recommendations etc rests with Kerry County Council and the National Monuments Service of the Dept. of Environment Heritage and Local Government.

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15. Figures



Figure 1: Site location map. Extract from OSI online mapping. Killahan graveyard enclircled.

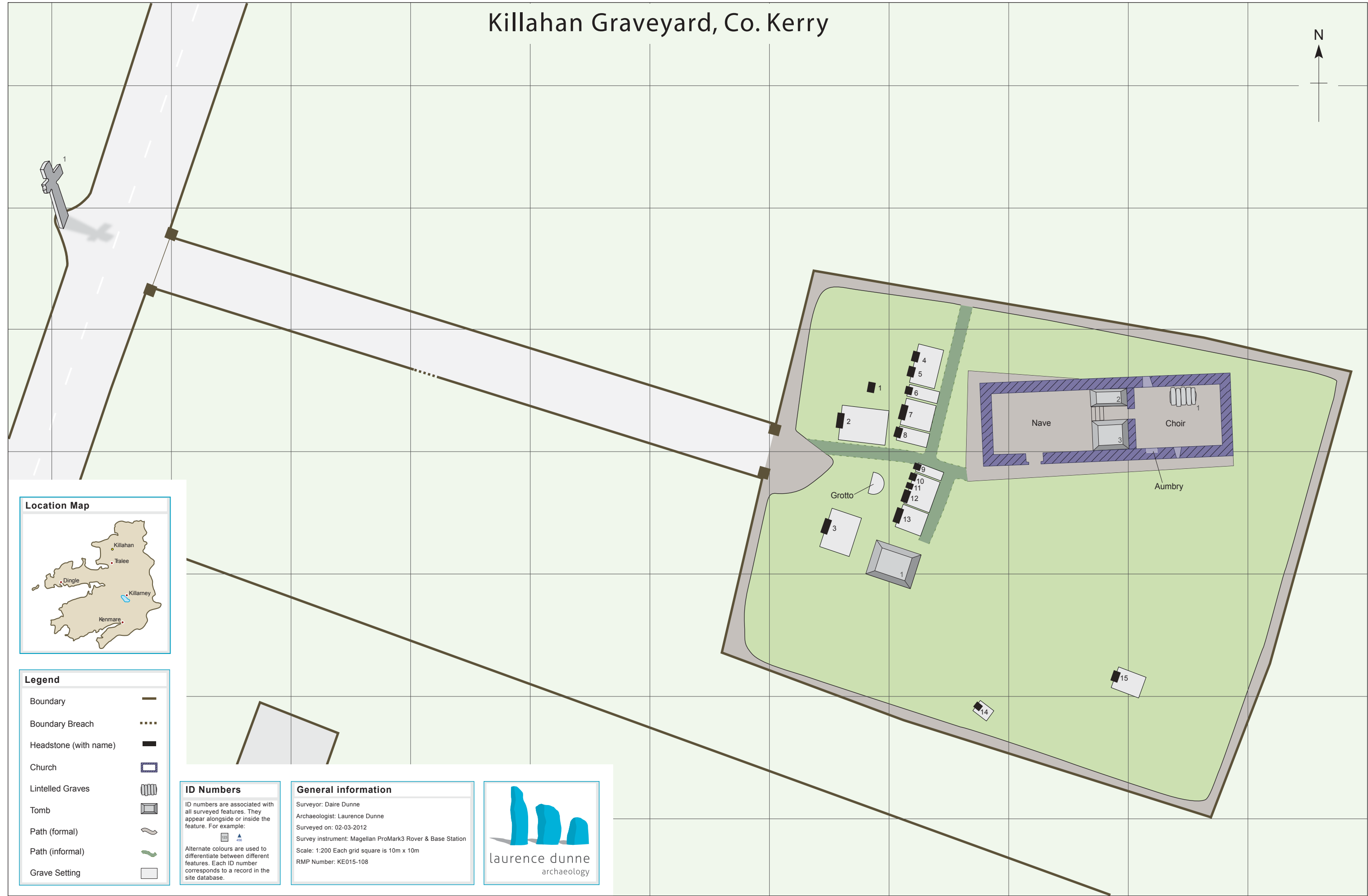


Figure 2: Archaeological survey plan of Killahan church and graveyard.



Figure 3: Extract from OS 1st Edition 6" map of Killahan graveyard, 1841.



Figure 4: Extract from OS 2nd Edition 25" map of Killahan church and graveyard, 1896.

16. Plates

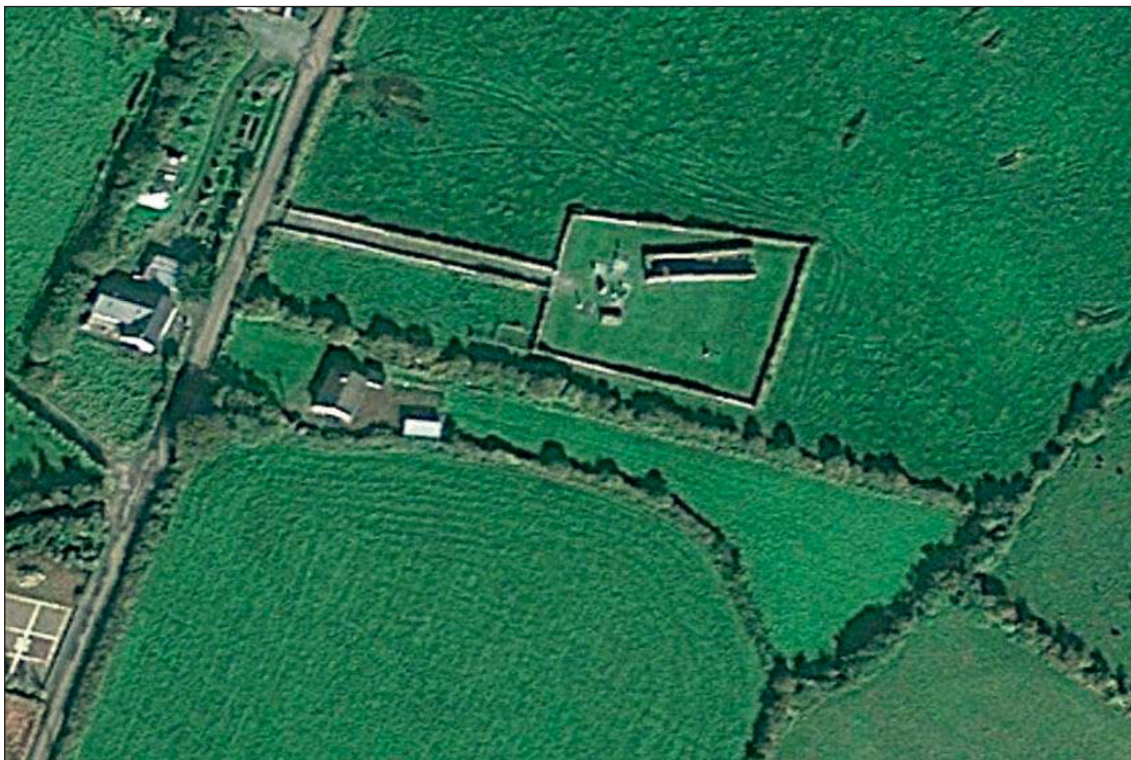


Plate 1: Google Earth aerial image of Killahan church and graveyard.



Plate 2: View from east of Tonaknock high stone cross and entrance to Killahan graveyard.

Plate 3: Close up view of west face of Tonaknock cross. Note circular inscribed motifs and rounded corners.



Plate 4: View of Killahan church and graveyard from south east corner.

Plate 5: Interior view of blocked up window in south elevation of Killahan church. Note four chamfered sandstones of RH side.

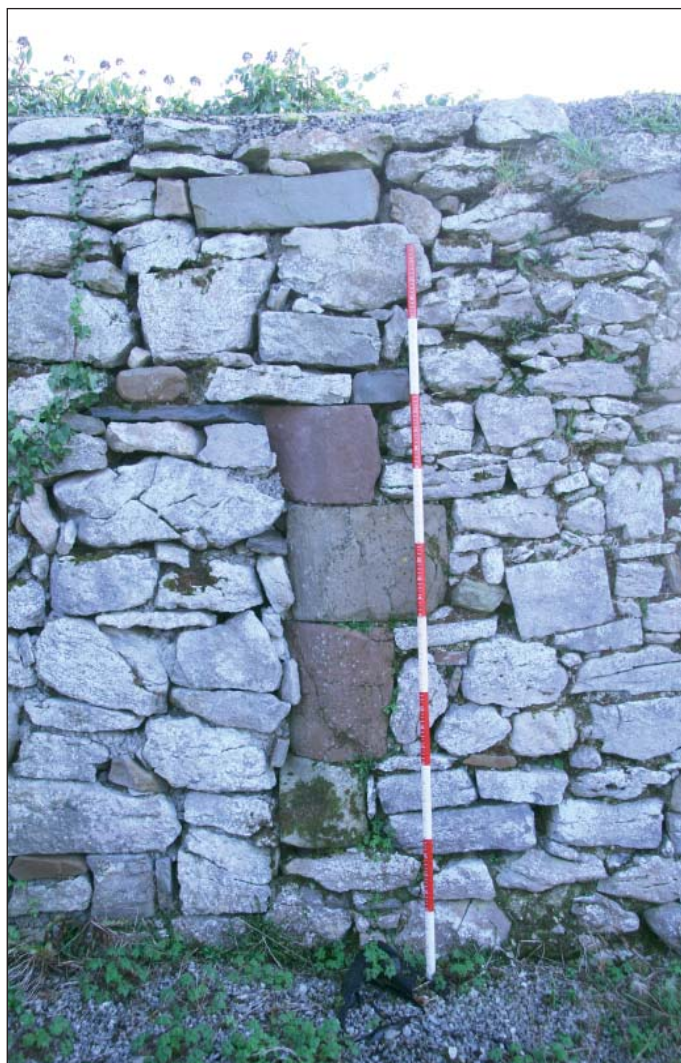


Plate 6: Interior view of blocked up possible window on north elevation of Killahan church. Note splayed ingoings on right and straight ingoings on left.



Plate 7: View of possible blocked up aumbry in south choir elevation in close proximity to party wall between choir and nave.



Plate 8: Interior view of doorway in south elevation from west. Note massive stone blocks in fabric.



Plate 9: View of east exterior gable of Killahan church. The original quoins stand to full height however the remaining masonry is recent, poor and inappropriate.



Plate 10: View of north west exterior limits of Killahan church. Scaled ranging rods situated beside recently poorly rebuild breach in north elevation.



Plate 11: View of approach and entrance to Killahan graveyard from south.



Plate 12: View of section of south boundary wall of rubble stone masonry and 'soldier' capping.



Plate 13: View from south east corner of graveyard of overgrown gravelled pathway and boundary walls.




Plate 14: Interior view of Killahan church from east. Note blocked up window on left, party wall between choir and nave and recently exposed lintelled grave.




Plate 15: View of tomb in Killahan graveyard from west. Note poor construction and recent masonry tumble at both corners.


17. Appendix 1 Tombs

Surname:	UNKNOWN
Tomb No:	1
Photo No:	163-0284
	
Notes:	

Collapsed P **Open** N **Rendered** P **Overgrown** N

Surname:	UNKNOWN
Tomb No:	3
Photo No:	163-0288
	
Notes:	

Collapsed N **Open** N **Rendered** Y **Overgrown** N

Surname:	UNKNOWN
Tomb No:	2
Photo No:	163-0287
	
Notes:	

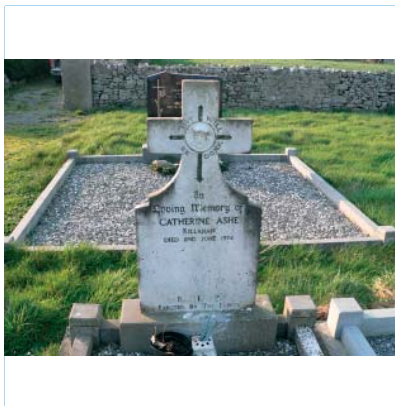
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18. Appendix 2 Named Headstones

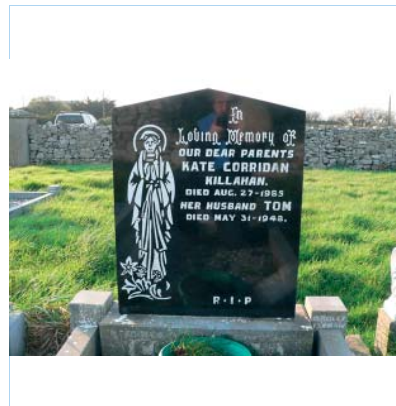
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Grave No:	8
Photo No:	163-0273



Surname:	Ashe
Grave No:	2
Photo No:	163-0272



Surname:	Corridan
Grave No:	6
Photo No:	163-0270



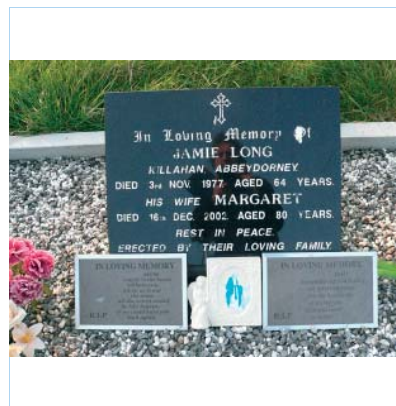
Surname:	Dooley
Grave No:	9
Photo No:	163-0276



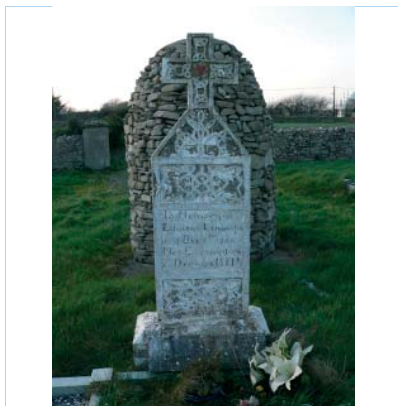
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Grave No:	15
Photo No:	163-0286



Surname:	Long
Grave No:	13
Photo No:	163-0281



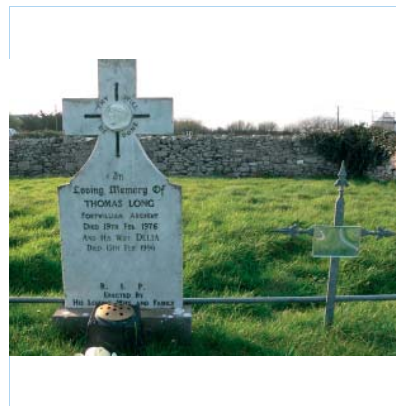
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Grave No:	12
Photo No:	163-0280



Surname:	Long
Grave No:	11
Photo No:	163-0279



Surname:	Long
Grave No:	5
Photo No:	163-0269



Surname:	Long
Grave No:	4
Photo No:	163-0269



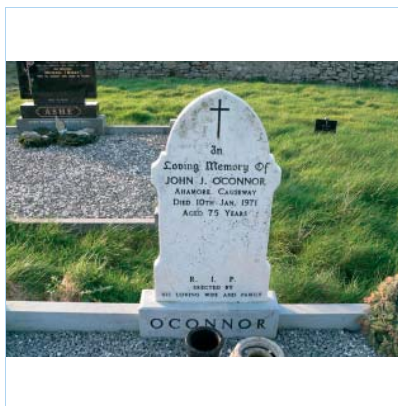
Surname:	McCarthy
Grave No:	10
Photo No:	163-0277



Surname:	O'Callaghan
Grave No:	14
Photo No:	163-0285



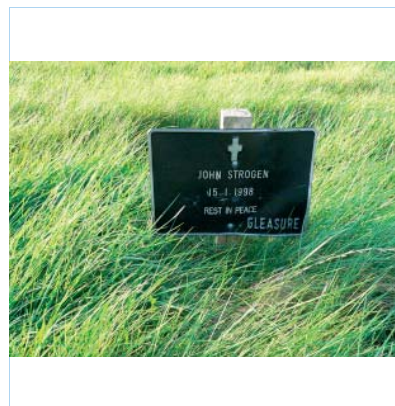
Surname:	O'Connor
Grave No:	7
Photo No:	163-0271



Surname:	O'Flaherty
Grave No:	3
Photo No:	163-0283




Surname:	Strogen
Grave No:	1
Photo No:	163-0274



19. Appendix 3 Lintelled Graves

LG No:	1
Photo No:	163-0295
	
Notes:	
Collapsed	N
Open	N
Overgrown	N

20. Appendix 4 Stone Cross

ID No:	1
Photo No:	163-0296
	
Notes	Tonaknock Stone Cross