

Rindoon Interpretation Plan

An Irish Walled Towns Network Interpretation Plan Pilot Programme



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Area Based Interpretation Plan is an action of the *Rinn Dúin Conservation and Management Plan* (2012). Its objective is to provide a strategy within which future site interpretation works may progress on the abandoned medieval town of Rindoon (fig 1.1). The various components of this archaeological complex include: town walls, castle, 17th century mill, church, earthworks, graveyard, hospital, houses, and a harbour. At present, interpretation is principally provided by a looped walk with panels along its route.

Most of the Rindoon is in the ownership of P.J. Grady. He has been operating an efficient and well run farm on the land since the early 1970s. Richard and Liz Collins, of St. John's House, which they run as a Bed and Breakfast, own the right of way onto the peninsula and an area of land at the North West end of the site.

This document is part of an Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) pilot scheme to establish an Irish format for area based interpretation plans.

1.2 Site Identification

Rindoon is located on a peninsula jutting out into Lough Ree. It lies predominately within the townland of Warren. The medieval hospital site which is located outside of the town walls is within the townland of Rinnagan. Both Warren and Rinnagan are in the parish of Lecarrow, Co. Roscommon.

The location of the site is shown in figure 1.2.

1.3 Statutory Context and Listings

The archaeology of the Rindoon peninsula is protected under the terms of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004. It is included in the Record of Monuments and Places for County Roscommon, as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. The site as a single entity is entered as Recorded Monument RO046-004--- and described as "Settlement Deserted". Rindoon is also a Registered Historic Monument in accordance with Section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1987. Two months' notice in writing must be given to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht of any proposed works at, or in relation to the monument. All archaeological investigations (excavation), geophysical surveys and underwater investigations require to be licensed in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1920 –2004. Any archaeological investigation should take into consideration published State Policy: *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage* Government Press (1999) and *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation* (1999).

The Record of Monuments and Places lists the monuments of Rindoon as follows:

RO046-004--- Warren Settlement Deserted

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RO046-00401- Warren Promontory Fort, Possible

RO046-00402- Warren Castle

RO046-00403- Warren Ecclesiastical Remains

RO046-00404- Warren Town Wall

RO046-00405- Rinnagan Church and Graveyard

RO046-00406- Warren Windmill

RO046-00407- Warren House Site

RO046-00408- Warren House

RO046-00409- Warren House

RO046-00410- Warren House

RO046-00411- Warren Harbour Possible

The monuments have never been taken into guardianship by either the Commissioners of Public Works, or the local authority, and remain in the ownership of the two landowners.

1.4 Methodology and Terminology

The report is based upon archival research and site visits. All proposed actions are in keeping with the *Rinn Dúin Conservation and Management Plan* (2012). This document follows the guidelines issued in Fáilte Ireland's document *Sharing our stories – using interpretation to improve the visitors' experiences at heritage sites* (n/d) and Roscommon County Council's *Telling people about our heritage – interpretation and signage guidance* (2010). In the absence of comparable Irish documents the structure and content of this report was influenced by the New South Wales Heritage Office's advisory document *Interpreting heritage places and items guidelines* (2005) and by interpretation plans previously completed in Australia and the UK. These include:

- *Angkor: living with heritage-heritage values and issues report*, 2008, Godden Mackay Logan
- *Castle Hill Heritage Park Interpretation Plan*, 2008, Godden Mackay Logan
- *Interpretation Plan for the castles and town walls of Edward I for CADW*, 2010, PLB Consulting
- *Telling The Rocks stories: interpreting the place and the people*, 2006, Godden Mackay Logan
- *The Rocks DIG Interpretation Site Plan*, 2007, Godden Mackay Logan

The report incorporates relevant principles and processes of the *Granada Charter: convention for the protection of the architectural heritage of Europe* (1985), the *Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance* (1999), and the *Enane Charter: the charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites* (2007). The terminology used in this report is consistent with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government's *Architectural heritage protection guidelines for planning authorities* (2004) and the *Burra Charter*.

1.5 Author Identification

This Interpretation Plan has been researched and prepared by Liam Mannix, Project Manager, Irish Walled Towns Network. Sections 1.1 (part of), 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2 were obtained from the *Rinn Dúin Conservation and Management Plan* (2012). Sections 1.1 (part of), 1.3 and 2.3 were written by Kevin Blackwood and Associates. Section 2.1 was written by John Bradley.

1.6 Acknowledgements

The IWTN acknowledges the help of St. John's Heritage Parish Group and Kevin Blackwood Associates in the preparation of this report.



Fig. 1.1 View of Rindoon looking southeast

[illegible]

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2.0 Historical Overview and Significance

2.1 Site History

The deserted town of Rindoon is situated on the peninsula of St. John's Point, on the western shore of Lough Ree, some nine miles north of Athlone (fig 2.1). The surviving remains constitute one of the most important complexes of Medieval monuments in the country. There is little physical evidence to indicate settlement before the coming of the Normans but the place-name Rindoon, "the fort of the promontory", is itself an indication of pre-Norman settlement.

In 1156 Ruaidhrí Ó Conchobhair drew his ships over the ice from Bhean Gaille to Rindoon, during a particularly hard winter. The pre-Anglo Norman fort was most likely a promontory fort, consisting of that part of the peninsula south of the castle, where it is cut off by a bank and ditch. The discovery of an Early Christian cross-slab in the graveyard adjoining the Medieval hospital of the Fratres Cruciferi indicates that this was an early church site, and it was almost certainly here that two hand bells and a bronze crucifixion plaque, now in the National Museum of Ireland, were found. Rindoon's possibilities as a bridgehead into Connacht first came to the attention of the Anglo-Normans in 1200-1 when John de Courcy spent a week ferrying his men across Lough Ree from Rindoon, following his defeat in Connacht (ALC).

Rinn Dúin was not occupied by the Anglo-Normans until 1227 when Toirdelbach Ó Conchobhair and Geoffrey Marisco erected a castle at Rindoon (fig.2.1). The town was evidently founded about this time because its market cross, bawn and ditch are mentioned in 1236 when Phelim Ó Conchobhair attacked the town (A Conn). The bawn and ditch were later superseded by a town wall (fig 2.2). No charter of incorporation survives but references to a portreeve indicate that it was administered by a corporation. The town's first account to the exchequer was in 1241. In 1259 the town was assessed for £8-5-8 per annum. By 1285 this had risen to £320 per annum and the town was supplied with corn, cloth and wine from Bordeaux (Harbison 1995, 141-2). Rindoon underwent a series of attacks from 1229 until 1321/3, and it is last mentioned in 1342-3 when it was described as being in Irish hands (Berry 1907, 335). In 1544 the earl of Clanrickarde petitioned for the land of St. John's of Rindoon. The castle may have been in ruins by this time because the grant eventually made to Christopher Davers and Charles Egingham mentioned only the hospital of the Crutched Friars and cottages in the town (11 RDKPRI, no. 1483). By 1574 Rindoon was back in Irish hands but in 1578 it was granted to Thomas Chester and George Goodman on condition that they maintained one English archer there (13 RDKPRI, no. 3241). In 1605-6 it was granted to Edward Crofton as "the monastery of St. John the Baptist, alias the Crotched Friars of St John the Baptist (fig. 2.4)... a slated church (fig. 2.5), belfry, cloister and all other buildings, gardens ... 6 waste cottages (fig. 2.6) in the town of St. John's . . . " (Erck 1846-52, i, 186). This and subsequent grants in 1608 indicate that the town had ceased to function and was now simply an estate (Erck 1846-52, i, 442-3; Russell and Prendergast 1874, 458). A more in depth examination of the history and archaeology of the site may be found in the *Rinn Dúin Conservation and Management Plan* (2012).

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http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Irish_Walled_Towns/Rinn_Duin_Conservation_and_Management_Plan.pdf

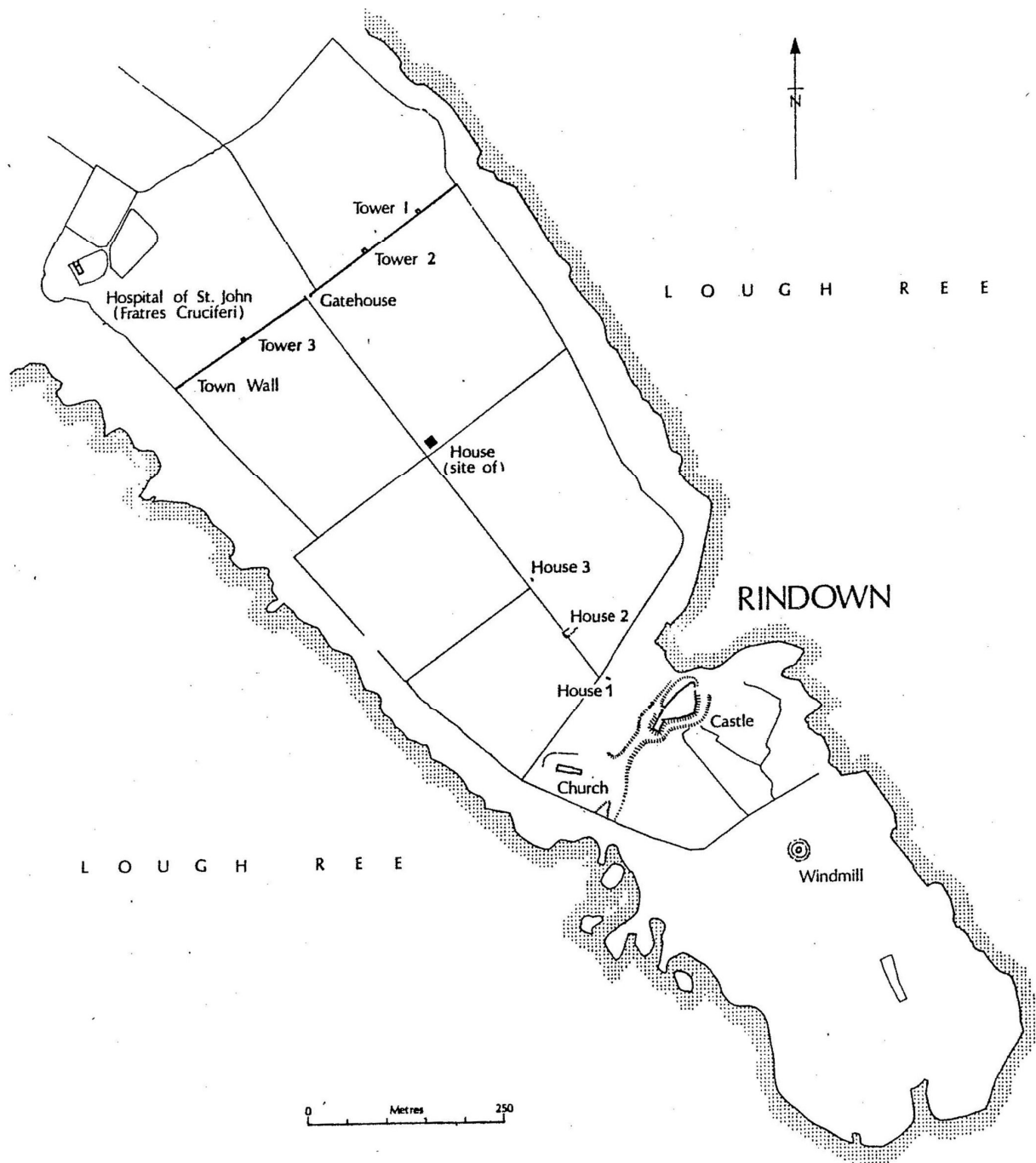


Fig. 2.1 Rindoon: outline plan showing principal archaeological monuments and field boundaries



Fig. 2.2 Rindoon Castle



Fig. 2.3 Town Wall



Fig. 2.4 Remains of hospital and graveyard



Fig. 2.5 Church



Fig. 2.6 Remains of house

2.2 Summary of the Significance of Rindoon

The most extensive and memorable built elements at Rindoon date from the medieval period, and are thereby linked as a historic entity, which together provide an insight into the history of the settlement. However, these cannot be viewed, or understood, in isolation. The land formation, underlying geology, the natural vegetation and the potentially pre-Norman earthworks, all contribute to an understanding of the medieval settlement; its *raison d'être* and how it functioned as a place to live.

Rindoon largely disappears from the written history of Ireland after the early 17th Century. However, the quiet post-medieval centuries that followed are also part of the story and account for the survival of the extensive medieval remains on the peninsula. The c.17th Century Mill, (almost certainly on the site of an earlier mill), as well as later farm buildings and field patterns, all contribute to an understanding of Rindoon as a place. The site is an important example of the symbiosis of history, culture, society and landscape. The very location of the site that led to it being chosen for settlement in time of conflict, has since made it untenable for urban settlement in more stable times. Where once there was an oasis of urbanity, and a colonial culture, literally “out on a limb” within the distinctly non-urban Gaelic West of Ireland, the land now provides a rural contrast to the urban setting of most contemporary lives: ruins, a sense of isolation and peace, surrounded by water in an otherwise ordered, and inhabited rural landscape. The overall significance of Rinn Dúin lies in its completeness. Defined by its peninsula

landform, it contains the remains of an important Anglo-Norman colonial settlement and defensive structures, which have lain, largely undisturbed, and without an overlay of later buildings and development in the 600 years since they were abandoned. In order to retain this significance and to protect any further extant archaeological evidence, the understanding of the site should include the band of fields across the neck of the peninsula as these would probably have been used for agriculture, or settlement during the years the town was occupied. As well as the dramatic remains of the town wall and castle, complemented by the harbour, parish church and hospital, the entire landscape includes clues and evidence that contribute to the understanding of both the medieval settlement and the pre-Anglo-Norman and post medieval history of the place. Rindoon Wood at the end of the peninsula, is of significance as a relatively rare example of native semi-natural woodland of that scale. As well as including a good variety of native species, it is a surviving feature that would have been a crucial resource for the medieval settlement. As such it is a good example of the symbiosis of the natural and man-made categories under which the significance of the place has been assessed. In conclusion it must be recorded that the entire Rindoon peninsula is of national significance.

3.0 Interpretation Principles

3.1 Why Interpret?

Rindoon is a medieval landscape of national importance. Its intactness has owed much to its location on a small peninsula, prone to flooding. This had resulted in a lack of development which has ensured the survival of its archaeological integrity. All this has occurred without the need for site interpretation. However, within the past few decades many of the monuments which have been slowly degrading have entered a tipping point in their status as easily legible ruins. This new phase of rapid destruction was recently illustrated when a large section of the gate house collapsed. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that the situation could be significantly worse. A few years ago much of the Rindoon's remaining masonry was in danger of collapse. However, since 2008 a series of conservation actions have taken place to preserve the future integrity of the town walls, church, hospital, and windmill. To date, no conservation work has been carried out on the castle.

The previous strategy of simply ignoring Rindoon is no longer tenable. The long term climate predictions for Ireland are for greater extremes in weather (Kelly and Stack, 2009). This means increasing incidences of damaging harsh winters. The winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11 were particularly severe. During those periods collapses occurred in both the town wall and graveyard enclosure.

All conservation work is dependent on funding. During any period of austerity, limited money tends to be spent on either core areas such as education or on projects that are seen to have an economic benefit. In this situation the intrinsic heritage value of Rindoon alone will not be enough to secure grant aid for conservation. In order to ensure that the site's future is guaranteed the number of people who know and enjoy Rindoon must increase. Firstly, locals need to be convinced of the social, cultural and historical value of Rindoon. They are the people who will ultimately protect the site and voice concerns over its future. To a large degree this has already happened. Secondly, tourists both national and international must be directed to the site. This action will encourage the local authority to value its economic role in anchoring tourism in South Roscommon. Rindoon is already beginning to act as a tourist totem around which local B&Bs, bars, restaurants and other attractions are benefiting from. In order to develop this further, interesting and easily understandable interpretation is required to broaden the appeal of the site beyond local walkers and people with an interest in archaeology. It is this that will open the site to a wide cross section of the population and make it an attractive destination for tourists with a broad interest in Ireland's past. It is for these reasons that Rindoon's interpretation is essential to its long term conservation.

Good heritage interpretation can transform an apparently empty old space into a dense and interesting network of places. It makes it into an experience for visitors. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Rindoon is a vulnerable heritage site. Certainly, its accessibility and the future securing of conservation funding depends on it demonstrating a community and economic value. At present, the site also operates as a working farm with B&B. Access is at the pleasure of the landowners. There is no

established right of way. It is due to their cooperation that people can see the monuments. Consequently, great care must be made to ensure that damage is minimised and numbers do not increase to a level that unduly affects the two landowners. At the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the central pagoda is now out of bounds. Carrying capacities of vulnerable sites are notoriously difficult to estimate. This Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan has suggested that visitor numbers be limited to 10,000 per annum. Accordingly, all the heritage interpretation actions suggested in this chapter have emerged in consideration of this figure.

3.2 Rindoon's Meanings

Each heritage place has its own character perceived differently by various strands of society. Rindoon is certainly no different. At various times it has been a: Early Medieval landscape and fort, possible Viking outpost, site of slaughter, zone of exclusion, place of commercial promise, and a town in decline. Today, it is seen by various people as: a place of outstanding beauty, a farm with inconvenient planning issues, a drinking den, an area full of dangerous buildings, a place of calm and serenity, a largely untapped tourist attraction, a place to loot, and a conservation headache.

Rindoon's core meaning as perceived by the key stakeholders is that of an abandoned medieval town. Above all else, it is this meaning that both the Conservation and Management Plan and this document seeks to preserve. There has been at least 9000 years of human habitation throughout Ireland. Rindoon was only inhabited as a medieval town for just over three centuries. That is just c.3.5% of the peninsula's likely use by people. Yet, it is these few hundred years that will effectively dominate the site's interpretation. This policy is appropriate. Rindoon is the most intact abandoned medieval walled town in either Ireland or the UK. This rarity needs to be protected. In order to accomplish this, appropriate interpretation is vital.

The form that any interpretation may take should not degrade the character of the landscape. This will allow people to continue to imprint their own meanings onto Rindoon. Under no circumstances should the site become a mass tourism destination. Such an action would ruin the authenticity of the place and by association all the various meanings people have for Rindoon.

Typically in Ireland what are seen as the core, impressive attributes of a monument tend to be promoted by conservation professionals. Indeed, it is usually the large imposing sites that are conserved at all (e.g. Dublin Castle, Newgrange, and The Rock of Cashel). The result is a skewed and elitist version of the past revolving around great men and great events. Women, children, the everyday workers are sidelined and placed in the context of powerful men. In Rindoon, the interpretation should aim to demonstrate the messiness and complexity of daily life in a medieval town. All layers and strands of medieval urban society should be proportionally explored. Regardless though of the academic rigour and reflexivity through which the interpretation is processed, it needs to be acknowledged that whatever is done will inevitably be to some degree, wrong. We simply do not exactly know what things were like. Nonetheless, that is not the point of heritage. It is for the benefit of the living not the dead.

3.3 Guiding Heritage Principles

The interpretation of Rindoon is to be carried out in accordance with the relevant principles of the Granada, Burra, and Ename Charters. The principles contained within the charters provide specific guidance for works on the site. The Ename Charter on the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites is included within this document as an appendix. Relevant principles from the Granada and Burra charters include the following:

Granada Charter Article 12

While recognizing the value of permitting public access to protected properties, each Party undertakes to take such action as may be necessary to ensure that the consequences of permitting this access, especially any structural development, do not adversely affect the architectural and historical character of such properties and their surroundings.

Burra Charter Article 2.2

The aim of *conservation* is to retain the *cultural significance* of a *place*.

Burra Charter Article 5.1

Conservation of a *place* should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.

Burra Charter Article 7.2

A *place* should have a *compatible use*. The policy should identify a use or combination of uses or constraints on uses that retain the cultural significance of the place. New use of a place should involve minimal change, to significant fabric and use; should respect associations and meanings; and where appropriate should provide for continuation of practices which contribute to the cultural significance of the place.

Burra Charter Article 14

Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a *use*; retention of *associations* and *meanings*; *maintenance*, *preservation*, *restoration*, *reconstruction*, *adaptation* and *interpretation*; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

Burra Charter Article 15.2

Changes which reduce *cultural significance* should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit.

Burra Charter Article 15.4

The contributions of all aspects of *cultural significance* of a *place* should be respected. If a place includes *fabric*, *uses*, *associations* or *meanings* of different periods, or different aspects of cultural significance,

emphasising or interpreting one period or aspect at the expense of another can only be justified when what is left out, removed or diminished is of slight cultural significance and that which is emphasised or interpreted is of much greater cultural significance.

Burra Charter Article 25

The *cultural significance* of many places is not readily apparent, and should be explained by *interpretation*. Interpretation should enhance understanding and enjoyment, and be culturally appropriate.

3.4 Possible Tourism and Visitor Management Issues

- Disruptive to operation of farm and residence/B&B
- Increased traffic and parking on approach roads
- Conflict between conservation and tourism, e.g. one location may be in greater need of conservation work yet is not seen as fundamental to the tourist product
- Increased visitor numbers means increased needs, i.e. toilet and refreshments
- Damage by visitors to fields through the creation of rough dirt paths
- Damage by visitors to monuments
- Some areas of Rindoon, particularly around the castle are still dangerous

The increase in the numbers of visitors to Rindoon will bring benefits to shops, bars, restaurants, and B&Bs at both a local and county level. However, inevitably the increased numbers will create management issues that should be taken into account now. If this is not done conflict will inevitably arise between the desire for the public to enjoy the site and the landowners' rights to use their land as they see fit within the law. There is also the threat that an excessive number of visitors may endanger the heritage values of the site. Consequently, visitor numbers and behaviour must be managed so as to protect both the heritage values of the place and the rights of the landowners. At least twice yearly meetings should be convened with all stakeholders to ascertain the impact on Rindoon's archaeology and the quality of life of the site owners. Any actions that emerge from these meetings should be in keeping with the Conservation and Management Plan.

3.5 Audience

The heritage values of Rindoon are not well known by the wider community surrounding the site. They may indeed know of its existence but not of its national or international importance. In the county, there is very little if any knowledge of the site. Nationally, Rindoon is principally only known by a small number of historians and archaeologists. Improved interpretation of Rindoon will make the place appreciated by as wide a population as possible. However, that interpretation must be designed to fulfil the needs of a visitor with a general interest in heritage. In no way should there be any onsite interpretation created solely for the benefit of specialists. This would dehumanise the site and create a

zone devoid of the voices that once lived in the town of Rindoon. Instead, all interpretation works should engage with the audience and provoke them into wanting to learn more about the place.

Little quantifiable data has been collected about visitation. Anecdotal evidence points to a total figure of c.6,500 for 2011. This includes the c.1,500 people that attended the medieval festival in August. The most popular activity was walking.

According to CSO figures the population of County Roscommon in 2006 was almost 59,000. The population of the local electoral division into which Rindoon is located was 311. Over six thousand people were listed as being either higher or lower professional. A further eight thousand individuals were listed as being employers or managers. This is particularly relevant as two thirds of committed cultural tourists work in professional or managerial positions (European Travel Commission, 2005). Athlone in County Westmeath is 20km to the south of Rindoon. Almost 20,000 people live within 3km of the town.

Roscommon's market share of foreign tourists coming to Ireland is less than 1% (*Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2010-2014*, n/d). There is no corresponding figure available of the number of Irish tourists. Nonetheless, according to the *Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2010-2014* it is likely to be proportionate in comparison with overseas tourism. In 2007, 58,000 foreign tourists visited Roscommon. By comparison, nationally, 7,737,000 foreigners holidayed in Ireland. In 2010 that figure had dropped to 5,865,000 (Fáilte Ireland, 2011). No exact number for Roscommon is available. Regardless of this, as there was a significant drop in figures to the whole West region it can safely be inferred that Roscommon also suffered a decline in tourist numbers.

Of the tourists that came to Ireland in 2010, 59% were white collar workers (C1). A further 24% were managerial/professional (AB). Forty two percent of all tourists either rented or brought over a car. Due to the remoteness of the Rindoon, the high level of car availability amongst foreign tourists is important to note. It is also significant that the single most popular activity amongst foreign tourists was hiking/cross country walking. Almost seven hundred thousand people participated in walking in 2010.

Due to the lack of empirical evidence it is impossible to categorise Rindoon's current visitor typology. However, thanks to anecdotal evidence it appears that the majority of visitors to Rindoon are Co. Roscommon residents wishing to walk in a spectacular location. There are also a significant yet unknown number of foreign and national tourists that are locally recommended to visit the site.

3.6 Target Market

The looped walk came into existence in 2009. The popularity of the site for walking has increased steadily since then. In 2011, c.6,500 people visited the site. Fifteen hundred of these were for the annual Walled Towns Day Festival. At present, the principal reason for visiting the site is as a place to walk. All future interpretation actions will seek to consolidate the existing audience and provide encouragement to those who have yet to visit the site to do so.

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Target Groups	Interests and Expectations
Local Residents	Figuring out how Rindoon fits into their sense of self and where the site lies within the national narrative. Exercise opportunity in a unique location. Interesting and informative interpretation explaining the evolution of the site.
Day Visitors	An interesting and zero cost afternoon which will enrich their body and mind.
Families on Holiday	Great scenery. Child friendly environment where children can explore and learn.
Older People	Easily navigable and moderately strenuous walk with high quality interpretation.
Irish Tourists	High quality interpretation explaining Rindoon within a wider Irish context. Easily navigable looped walk which provides a sense of exploration.
Overseas Visitors	Multi lingual high quality interpretation explaining Rindoon within the wider Irish and international context. They want an interesting experience and a sense that Rindoon is unique. They also want a sense that they are walking through a special place that is not experienced by the vast majority of tourists to Ireland.
School and Education Groups	Bespoke activity sheet that is linked with the national school and junior certificate curriculum. High quality interpretation that makes Rindoon's medieval past come to life. Additional information available online.
Travel Groups	High quality interpretation explaining medieval life in Rindoon and how the town fell into decline. A route that is easily navigable. Rindoon's lack of development and continued operation as a farm will give visitors the satisfaction that they are entering a 'real' place not contrived for tour groups.

3.7 Key Messages and Stories

According to Fáilte Ireland (n/d) only about 10% of the population have learning as a prime objective when visiting attractions. It is a secondary motivation to experiencing something authentic and enriching. The laying out of archaeological or architectural facts on lectern units is interesting to only a narrow band of society. What's more, it fails to 'people' the site and give visitors a sense of what the town was actually like. All heritage interpretation should be interesting, informative and accessible. It should seek to enhance the visitor experience. This is accomplished by using the key messages and stories of the site. These messages and stories should emerge from the principal themes of the town's existence.

Historic maps, written sources, and archaeological information have provided much information about how Rindoon both developed and failed as a town. These are the key ingredients when considering the stories through which Rindoon will be interpreted. The key stories are:

Life on the frontier – the town is defined by its location on the edge between Anglo-Norman and Gaelic controlled lands. What was it like for the residents of the town to live in such a precarious location? What were their daily lives like? What was life like for those outside the walls?

Maritime/River – the story of Rindoons role as a trade and military centre from the Viking period up into the late medieval period.

The natural environment – its evolution from the medieval to today.

3.8 Interpretation Objectives

After visiting Rindoon visitors should have significantly enhanced their understanding of the site and the life of its medieval inhabitants. They should have a greater appreciation of the importance of the place as an exceptional physical realisation of Ireland's Middle Ages. Below are the objectives of all future interpretation actions:

Knowledge and understanding

Visitors will:

- know about the daily reality of life for burgesses in a medieval town
- learn about the complex relationship between the Anglo-Normans and Gaelic Irish along this frontier zone
- know about the typical morphology of medieval towns
- know about the nature of maritime trade and river transport during the Viking and medieval periods
- know about the various flora and fauna that exist on the peninsula and how this differs from the middle ages occupation

Skills

Visitors will:

- be introduced to the concept of 'reading' the monuments and the landscape for clues to their uses and changes over time

Enjoyment/inspiration

Visitors will:

- have the satisfaction of learning about people from the past and feeling Rindoon come to life
- enjoy the sense of exploration and discovery
- enjoy the beauty of the place
- feel inspired and invigorated by the location itself and the dramatic lives of the medieval people who lived on the border of two cultures

Attitudes and values

Visitors will:

- grow to appreciate the complexity of the past and how seemingly intractable enemies can trade and collaborate
- appreciate the valuable addition the monuments make to the region's tourism attractiveness
- value the ongoing conservation and research being undertaken onsite
- understand the intrinsic importance of the place in its own right
- understand the role places like Rindoon have in forming and securing our identity

Activity and behaviour

Visitors will:

- wish to return and stay longer
- encourage friends and family to visit
- wish to find out more about the site
- feel a connection with Rindoon and its future management
- feel compelled to visit other heritage sites
- support the work of St. Johns Heritage Group, The Irish Walled Towns Network and the Heritage Council

4.0 Critical Review and Site Inventory

4.1 Pre visit information

At present there is a low level of awareness by people in Co. Roscommon and Athlone about Rindoon. There is no dedicated website or leaflet. The only national tourist websites that Rindoon is on is discoverireland.ie and irishtrails.ie. The entry on both websites is about the looped walk. Despite being a site of national importance and being mentioned in the *Roscommon Tourism Strategy 2010-2014* it is not currently listed as an attraction on visitroscommon.ie. Rindoon is not available for sat-nav selection. Rinnagan must be inputted.

4.2 Arrival

Rindoon is located approximately 3km to the west off the N61 Athlone-Roscommon road. The two main approach roads are at Lecarrow and Carrowmurragh. Both are narrow and twisty. Nonetheless, they are capable of carrying a 52 seat bus provided opposing traffic yields.

At Carrowmurragh the road signage directing people to the site is poor. By contrast, at the N61 Lecarrow junction two new large signs direct people to Rindoon (fig. 4.1). Signage on the country roads is not necessary as both approaches do not require turning off the road. Nonetheless, there is one sign on the Rindoon side of Lecarrow Village and another at Carrowphadeen junction. The latter sign is confusing.

There is no public vehicular access to the site. Instead, visitors must park outside the entrance gate (fig. 4.2). The car park spaces are not delineated. There is only capacity for two or three cars at any one time. If this area is full, visitors must park as best they can along the road. There is no great sense of arrival. Consequently, the site may be easily missed.

Lecarrow Harbour is popular with boating tourists during the summer. However, there is no information at the harbour telling people specifically about Rindoon. The newly installed pontoon at to the east of the Castle at safe harbour has no information about the site or that access is permitted via tender boat (fig. 4.3).

It is worth noting that there is no public transport link to the site. The nearest bus stop is at Lecarrow. There is only one bus a day from Athlone and another from Roscommon. Both are early in the morning. There is no weekend service.



Fig. 4.1 Recently erected N61 signage at Lecarrow



Fig. 4.2 Parking at Rindoon

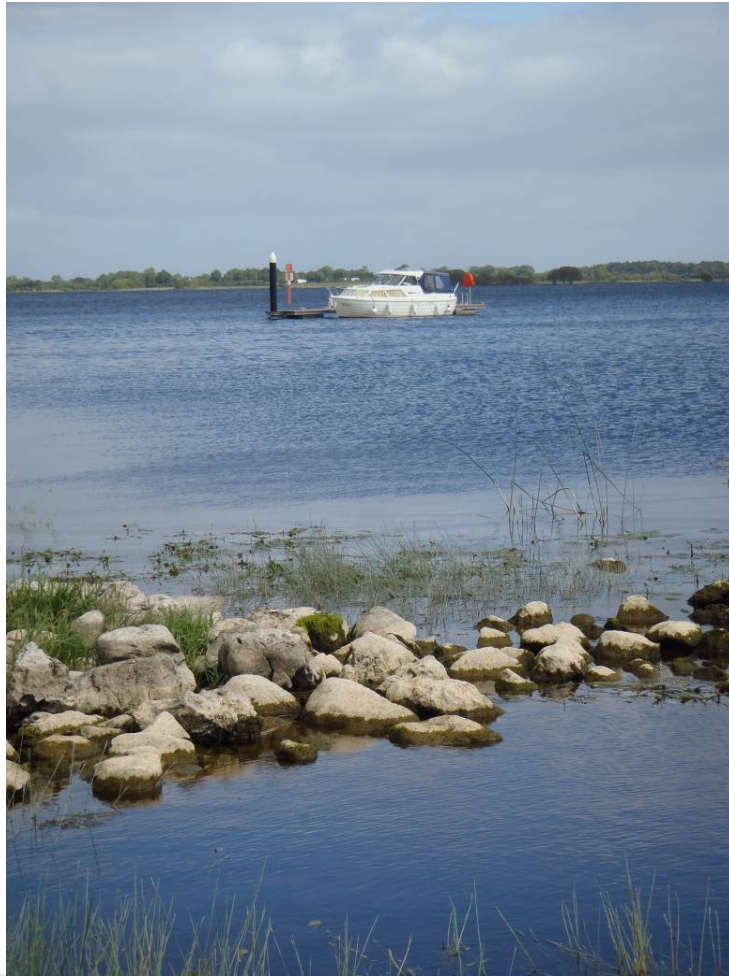


Fig. 4.3 Pontoon at Rindoon

4.3 Circulation, Access and Existing Interpretation

Outside the gate, there are two information boards (fig. 4.4). Both are solely in English. One provides a good map and information about the looped walk that goes through the site. It gives little information about the nature of the site. The other board is older and provides details about the medieval town and the nearby wood. The board is very factual and does not ‘people’ the site. It is also becoming obscured by the growth of algae on its surface. There are no refreshments or public toilets on site.

Exploration of Rindoon is only permitted by using the Warren Point Looped Walk (National Looped Walk 97). The Rinn Dúin Castle Loop 97a is 3km. The Warren Point Loop 97b is 4.5km. Both take visitors on a circular route around the town. The current landowners are given a grant to ensure that the walk is maintained. Beginning the walk, visitors must open a farm gate, cross over a cow grid, and go through an area that may contain a bull (fig. 4.5). There is a sign at the gate warning visitors of its possible presence. The walk starts and ends at the perimeter gate.

The loop is fully way marked. The directional posts are not set in foundations. Instead, one end is spiked. The lack of strong foundations makes them susceptible to movement by cattle (fig. 4.6). The route is not wheelchair accessible. Nor it is suitable for people with buggies. Stiles have to be climbed at several locations (fig. 4.7). During the winter some of the trail is flooded. When this happens, walkers must negotiate marshy and flooded areas without the provision of additional diversion signage, stepping stones, or temporary bridges. There is only one small section of elevated walkway.

Along the route there are seven Heritage Council funded information boards (fig. 4.8). All are solely in English. The design is simple yet elegant. They provide information on the archaeology of the site. However, they do not adequately 'people' the sight. This is important as it does not allow audiences to develop a deeper connection with the individuals that lived in the town during the Middle Ages. The lectern units are held in position by pins with a flat apron at the surface. There is no protection provided for the boards from cattle. As a result, they have become ideal scratching posts. Several have suffered significant damage and require replacement.

The lectern units are complemented by a smartphone guide (www.everytrail.com/guide/warren-point-looped-walk-of-rinn-duin). The guide is mostly text based although there is also a substantial audio element. Both the script and audio are only in English. There are no mentions of the smartphone guide on either the discoverireland.ie or irishtrails.ie websites. Furthermore, there is no notice or QR code at the entranceway telling people about the guide or linking it to the site where it can be downloaded.

There is no provision for people who prefer a more active engagement when learning. Instead, passive reading dominates. The existing interpretation does not connect the visitor with the residents of the town nor does it ask them to use all their senses. For instance, on the smartphone guide there are no sections of medieval folk music or sounds of a bustling marketplace which would help increase the visitors understanding of medieval life in Rindoon. There are no onsite interpretive activities that are dedicated to children. Overall, the interpretation provision merely permits visitors some comprehension of what they are walking across. A few years ago there was nothing. That the walk and panels exist at all is down to the dedication of the local community, principally St. John's parish Heritage Group. This work is to be commended. However, the existing interpretation should be seen as being only a base to build upon. More is needed to increase the level of appreciation and comprehension visitors have for Rindoon.



Fig. 4.4 Information boards at entrance



Fig. 4.5 Way mark post and bull warning sign



Fig. 4.6 Way mark post



Fig. 4.7 Walking boards with metal stile in background



Fig. 4.8 Onsite interpretation panel

4.4 Events

Since 2010 there has been an annual Walled Towns Day held on site at the end of August. The events are organised by St. John's Parish heritage Group. In 2011, c.1,500 people attended the event (fig. 4.9). Parking was provided on fields adjacent to the town walls. Both festivals were held during Heritage Week. This permits the festival the opportunity to feed off the publicity and atmosphere that this national event creates. The event is family friendly with many light events happening throughout the day. No festival was held in 2012. However, one is planned for 2013.



Fig. 4.9 Walled Towns Day 2011

5.0 Possible Interpretation and Visitor Management Actions

The role of all onsite heritage interpretation actions should be to develop the connection visitors have with Rindoon. Through the use of story, the interpretation of the site should provide clarity about its past, reveal features not easily noticeable, encourage awareness, and offer insight. Above all, Rindoon's interpretation should enrich the visitor experience and encourage active engagement with the place.

All installations should be designed to cause the minimal amount of disturbance to the archaeological landscape as possible. Care must also be made so as to not impede the activities of the landowners. Proper adherence to the National Monuments Act (1930-2004) should be followed at all times.

5.1 Pre-Arrival

- **Webpage**

At present there is no dedicated webpage about Rindoon. On the planned IWTN consumer focused website there will be a specific page for Rindoon. The webpage should communicate that Rindoon is a special destination, worthy of a visit. It will contain: maps of both the location and the site, information on local accommodation, links to downloadable smartphone trails, and finally, the conservation and management plan.

- **Flyer**

A high quality colour flyer telling people of Rindoon's heritage value is needed. The flyer should communicate that Rindoon is a special destination, worthy of a visit. Maps showing Rindoon's location and the site itself should be included, as should QR codes for any smartphone trails. The link for the IWTN Rindoon webpage should also be on the flyer. The looped walks are to mentioned. Distribution points for the flyer would be: local businesses, tourist offices, Clonmacnoise, and other tourist attractions in the county and Athlone area.

- **Public Transport**

For those who do not have access to a car the number of busses from Roscommon Town and Athlone that stop at Lecarrow should be increased significantly to allow half day trips to Rindoon.

- **Bike Rental Scheme**

A low cost bike rental scheme should be established allowing both public transport users and people docked in Lecarrow harbour the opportunity to cycle the 3km to Rindoon. One option is for the Council to buy twelve bikes, enter into a partnership with an existing local business, and provide insurance. The bike rental scheme will be complemented by a bike stand at the entrance to Rindoon. Another option is for Leader to provide funding.

Rindoon Interpretation Plan

A simple vandal and waterproof A2 sized sign should be erected on one of the shower room doors at the harbour informing people about Rindoon and the bike rental scheme. Cavan County Council operates a similar scheme from their offices.

http://www.cavancoco.ie/cavanweb/publish/domain/cavancoco/Default.aspx?StructureID_str=402

- **Section in Planned Parish Heritage Centre**

An area should be made available in any new parish heritage centre for a small display about Rindoon. A combination of text, images, audio visual, and models could be used to tell the story of the site (fig. 5.1). All text should be kept to a minimum and be free of jargon. A map showing Rindoon's location relative to the centre's should be on display. Any new information boards are to be well designed and dominated by images of Rindoon both past and present. Scanable QR codes could be placed on the boards enabling smart phone users to link to YouTube videos about the site. A video could be made of Dr. Kieran O'Connor giving a 10 minute tour of Rindoon. This could be put on constant loop on a simple flat screen television with headsets for hearing (fig. 5.2). The display would not only entice people to visit the site but would also educate those who cannot physically walk over rough farmland.



Fig. 5.1 Information board at the Collins Barracks Museum, Dublin



Fig. 5.2 Simple audio visual display, Biarritz, France

5.2 Arrival

- **Arrival Sign**

At present it is not visually obvious that you have arrived at Rindoon. A fingerpost sign for the castle does exist at the farm gate. However, it is rather small. A larger sign is needed. The new sign should be similar to that shown in figure 5.3 and be erected on the existing post already directing people to the castle and B&B.

- **Information Boards**

The existing green information board is becoming obscured and contains a high degree of factual information that does not effectively 'people' the site. This board should be replaced with a larger yet sympathetically designed panel much like those present in Lough Boora, Co. Offaly (fig. 5.4). The board should contain a reconstruction drawing of the medieval town and

contain information about the site's history and the daily life of its inhabitants. The panel should be multilingual. A QR code linking smartphone users to the existing Everytrail audioguide and any other trails is to be included on the new panel. The National Looped Walk panel is to remain in place as it is well designed and provides a good map of the site.

- A warning sign is needed telling people how to behave on the site. Rindoon is contained within a working farm and access is at the pleasure of the site owners. Accordingly, visitors need to be made aware of their obligations. The behaviour guidelines should be clearly set out on the new information panel (fig. 5.5).

- **Bike Stand**

A number of cyclists visit the site. At present, there is no bike stand. A simple new stand should be provided immediately adjacent to the information panels (fig. 5.6). The stand should be designed so as to not reduce the number of possible car spaces.

- **Parking**

There are peak times when parking at the entrance is not sufficient. People are then forced to park at the side of the roads. This may lead to frustration for locals simply driving to and from their houses. Consequently, consideration should be given to creating spaces for up to five car spaces nearby. The car park spaces should be sympathetic to the rural landscape (fig. 5.7). A limestone gravel surface would be appropriate. A fingerpost directional sign should indicate where the car park is.

- **Toilets and Refreshments**

Due to the current visitation limit of 10,000 per annum and operational nature of the site the construction of toilet facilities and provision of refreshments is inappropriate. The current owners of the B&B have been continually imposed upon by visitors asking to use their toilet. A sign should be erected at the entrance to the B&B advising that toilets are for the use of patrons only. During peak visitor times the B&B may wish to function as a tea house and provide light refreshments. A sandwich board could be put at their gate during periods when it was open.

- **Rindoon pontoon**

In 2012 Waterways Ireland installed a pontoon c.100m to the east of Safe Harbour. An information board should be installed on the pontoon telling people that they are welcome to take a tender boat to shore and explore the site. The board should contain a reconstruction drawing of the medieval town and information about the site's history and the daily life of its inhabitants. The panel should be multilingual. A QR code linking smartphone users to the existing Everytrail audioguide and any other trails is to be included on the new panel.



Fig. 5.3 Heritage attraction signage, Waterford



Fig. 5.4 Tastefully designed information board, Lough Boora, Co. Offaly



Fig. 5.5 Safety information in Wharram Percy, UK



Fig. 5.6 Bicycle stand beside interpretation board, Lough Boora, Co. Offaly



Fig. 5.7 Car park in Lough Boora, Co. Offaly

5.3 Circulation and Interpretation

5.3.1 Peopling the town and imagining the historic landscape

Currently, the town is a ghost town without any ghosts. There is nothing to assist non archaeologists or historians in visualising what Rindoon may have looked like during the Middle Ages. Consequently, what is needed is a re-colonisation of the place by characters that were once there.

- **Interpretation Panels**

All of the existing onsite interpretation boards fail to adequately ‘people’ the site. Many have been severely damaged by livestock. For those reasons, replacement is desirable. On the new information boards reconstruction drawings should be used to indicate what the place may actually have looked like (figs. 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11). This will help visitors unite the various standing elements of the site together into a coherent image of a frontier town. The language used should be free of jargon. Furthermore, the subject matters of the boards should be based around a medieval person’s experiences rather than the ruins (e.g. instead of a board dealing in detail with the archaeology and architecture of the church, the information panel should be predominately about the religious life of the clergy and their parishioners). Multilingual summaries should be provided. The information panels should be mounted in the centre of freestanding timber sawhorses (fig. 5.12). For information on how to draft interpretation panels refer to Fáilte Ireland’s document *Sharing our stories – using interpretation to improve the visitors’ experiences at heritage sites* (n/d) and Roscommon County Council’s *Telling people about our heritage – Interpretation and Signage Guidance* (2010).

- **Building Footprints**

In areas that have undergone geophysical survey and later possible excavation the line of the discovered buildings could be marked out in the landscape (figs. 5.13 & 5.14). An accompanying information panel with a description and reconstruction drawing will greatly aid the visitor's impression of the building.

- **Windows on the Past**

In areas protected from cattle 'windows on the past' could be erected (figs. 5.15 & 5.16). These would have black outlines on a toughened glass screen showing what Rindoon may have looked like at its peak. These could be created with the correct perspective across the landscape thereby creating a spatially accurate overlay.

- **Wall Walk**

Erect a wooden wall walk along a short area of the conserved town wall (fig. 5.17). This will give visitors an appreciation of the defensive qualities of the town wall and reinforce to them the frontier nature of the settlement. The design should be obviously modern.

- **Audio Trails**

Develop an audio trail with the voice being that of a medieval child resident. In the trail she tells you about her life and about the importance of various places have to her and their role in her daily routine. Link it to phone GPS. Create multilingual versions. Ensure the QR code for the trail is clearly visible on the new information board at the entrance below the QR code for the already existing general information Everytrail walk (figs. 5.18 & 5.19).

- **Tour Guides**

Knowledgeable and entertaining tour guides are an excellent way of interpreting a place. They are particularly appropriate for time conscience bus tours. In Rindoon, a guide dressed and acting as an authentic medieval burgess could bring visitors across the site. A notice could be placed at the entrance and on the webpage advertising bookable tours. If this approach was taken, the landowners should receive appropriate compensation for the commercialisation of their land.

- **Events**

Develop an annual or biennial medieval festival. The event should be of a high quality. Attendance should be limited to 2000. Particular attention should be paid to educating people about daily medieval life, e.g. baking, trade, clothes, sanitation. Any re-enactors present are to be appropriate to the site and should both behave and be clothed in an authentically medieval manner (fig. 5.20). Include interactive activities for children about archaeology (e.g. dig box).



Fig. 5.8 Lectern unit with reconstruction drawing, Wharram Percy, UK



Fig. 5.9 Newtown Jerpoint reconstruction drawing courtesy of Uto Hogerzeil



Fig. 5.10 Trim Walls reconstruction drawing courtesy of Uto Hogerzeil



Fig. 5.11 Lectern unit with reconstruction drawing and multilingual summaries, Birdoswald Fort, UK



Fig. 5.12 Freestanding timber sawhorse with panel in centre giving information about erosion control, Hadrian's Wall, UK



Fig. 5.13 House marked out complete with hearth and gap for doorway, Wharram Percy, UK



Fig. 5.14 Marked out building plot, Wharram Percy, UK



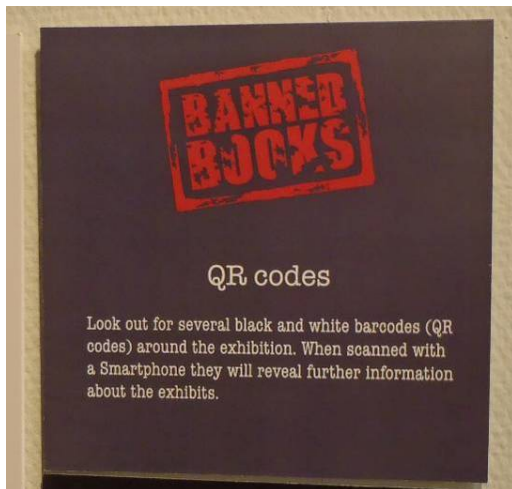
Fig. 5.15 Imprint of old image onto glass, Collins Barracks Museum, Dublin



Fig. 5.16 Toughened glass interpretation sign, Waterford



Fig. 5.17 Timber stairs and walkway, Dunluce Castle, Co. Antrim, UK



Figs. 5.18 & 5.18 Information about QR Codes and a QR barcode visible in top left hand corner of exhibition box, Scottish National Library, Edinburgh, UK



Fig. 5.20 Re-enactors cooking rabbit at Fethard Walled Towns Day, Co. Tipperary

5.3.2 Under your feet

- **Research Framework**

A series of archaeological research questions should be created in order to fill the information gaps which exist about Rindoon. These questions will dictate the manner of all future onsite investigations. A partnership with the Department of Archaeology at NUI Galway should be developed. Members of the academic staff should formulate the questions and encourage students conducting research to gradually answer these over time. All information should be made available on the Rindoon webpage. Consideration should be given to holding a conference based on the research undertaken.

- **Excavation Open Days**

If archaeological excavation is deemed necessary, publicised open days should be held (fig. 5.21). Local schools should be encouraged to visit.

- **Schools pack**

A downloadable archaeology schools pack should be created.



Fig. 5.21 Public archaeological excavation at Vindolanda Roman Fort, UK

5.3.3 Conserving Rindoon

- **Interpretive Panel**

A dedicated interpretative panel should be given over to the conservation work that has taken place in Rindoon. The panel should explain the significance of the site, the reasons for the conservation work, and the main actions that have taken place. The central role of St. John's Parish Heritage group should be acknowledged.

- **Heritage Centre**

Should a heritage centre be created in Lecarrow, a piece about the conservation work should be included in the section dedicated to Rindoon. Any information provided should not only deal with the physical conservation but also those who did it (fig 5.22).

- **Webpage**

A dedicated section of the Rindoon IWTN webpage should be given over to the story behind its conservation. The page should host all relevant documents connected to the recording and conservation of the various monuments on the site.

- **Communicating During Conservation Work**

During any future conservation work at least three public communication actions should take place (fig. 5.23). The following is a list of suggestions:

- Ensure all progress reports are uploaded to the relevant local authority website and issued to the IWTN for upload to the Rindoon webpage.
- During the course of conservation work ensure that the site is open to visitors for at least one hour a week. This hour should be at the same time every week. A temporary sign should be erected at the entrance gate advertising the visiting hour(s). Local schools, tourism office(s), etc., should be made aware of the visiting hour(s).
- School tours should be facilitated. Particular effort should be made to involve construction studies, woodwork, technical graphics and engineering students. The skills involved in conservation work should be explained.
- Erect a temporary interpretative display explaining the significance of the walls, the reasons for the conservation work, and the main actions taking place. Upon completion of work the display should be gifted to a local school, library, community centre, etc.
- Commission a short publication explaining the significance of the walls, the reasons for the conservation work, and the main actions taking place. The publication should be

distributed to local schools, library, tourist office(s), etc. The document should be uploaded to the relevant local authority website.



Fig. 5.22 A board at Vindolanda Roman Fort honouring the volunteers who conduct the archaeological excavations at the fort, UK



Fig. 5.23 Conservation talk being given, information boards visible in the background, Clonmel

5.4 Managing People on Site

- **Waymarking the Looped Walk**

Ensure that there are adequate way mark posts on the route of the looped walks. Outside the farmyard ensure that way mark posts are always visible (fig. 5.24). This will counteract any uncertainty that walkers may have of not being on the correct route. It will also make sure they do not wander off the path.

- **Keeping walkers to the Looped Walk and managing both erosion and flooding**

Along the vast majority of the Hadrian's Wall route in North England walkers go across open fields. Usually a c.1.5m wide strip of grass is cut to mark the way (fig. 5.25). This ensures that walkers stay to the prescribed route. Over time as the grass is regularly trimmed it becomes more concentrated and better to walk on. Where possible in Rindoon the route of the looped walks should be regularly trimmed to encourage better walking conditions. In marshy areas, either diversions should be well way marked or remedial actions taken place. Such actions could include the installation of simple plastic grates in small boggy sections (fig. 5.26). In areas of erosion, temporary signage should be erected advising walkers to walk beside but not on the exposed areas (fig. 5.27). Overall, a flexible and adaptive approach should be taken as regards the management of walkers along the route. Regular inspections should be carried out to ensure that walkers can easily navigate the site.

- **Rindoon Castle**

Until made safe, access to the castle should be barred by a simple timber gate or sawhorse (figs. 5.12 & 5.28).

- **Visitor Obligations Notice**

A warning sign is needed at the beginning of the looped walk telling people how to behave on the site (fig. 5.5). Rindoon is contained within a working farm and access is at the pleasure of the site owners. Accordingly visitors need to be made aware of their obligations. The behaviour guidelines should be clearly set out on the new information panel. Visitors should be told to: lock their cars and ensure no valuables are visible, respect the archaeological monuments, remain on the looped walk route, keep dogs on a lead, close all gates, bring home all rubbish, not to climb the monuments, not to camp, not to light fires, etc. Visitors should also be told to be mindful of: livestock, loose masonry, uneven surfaces, uneven steps, deep water, slip hazards, trip hazards, and sudden drops. The lack of toilets is to be also mentioned. Parents should be reminded to supervise their children at all times. The most important thing is that visitors are told to respect the landowners' property and their right to privacy.

- **Managing Localised Danger Spots**

In areas of particular danger such as sheer drops, localised warning signage should be erected (fig. 5.29). Localised signage could also be erected warning people not to climb a monument (fig. 5.30).



Fig. 5.24 Increased way making required close to farmyard



Fig. 5.25 Cut grass path in open field along Hadrian's Wall route, UK

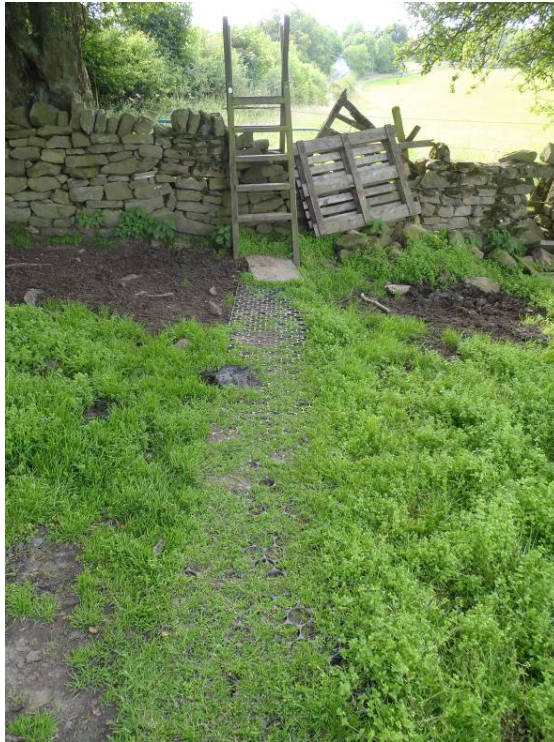


Fig. 5.26 Simple plastic mesh along Hadrian's Wall route, UK



Fig. 5.27 Information about erosion control and lambing, Hadrian's Wall, UK



Fig. 5.28 Safety barrier, Dunluce Castle, Co. Antrim, UK. A similar action or timber gate should occur across the main entrance to Rindoon Castle



Fig. 5.29 Localised warning sign, Kirkham Priory, UK



Fig. 5.30 Climbing warning sign, York, UK

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Appendix

The Ename Charter

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