

Archaeological & Historical Background

for House Conversion in
Emlaghmore, Ballyconneely, Co Galway

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Desktop and Field Visit

A Desktop Study (the 1st and 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (OS) Maps of the area, online satellite and OS Aerial Photography) and Field Survey (the area was visited and the relevant structures were inspected and photographed) of the proposed development were conducted. The site contains two buildings, one a small farm dwelling and a roofless out house to its rear, from their appearance and simple architecture they are likely to date from the very Late-19th century or Early-20th century, c.1900. The farmhouse has been partially modernized in recent times with the addition of electricity a modern door and windows.

Topographical Setting

The dwelling is located on the sheltered and secluded south-eastern face of an elongated drumlin ridge, (see photo 1). It is one of four drumlins in the immediate area, two in Emlaghmore townland and two in adjoining townland of Dohulla. They are separated from each other by the course of the Dohulla River and low lying inter-drumlin bogs.

The townland name is derived from two Irish words *Imleach Mór*, meaning a 'big glacial hill'. A cluster of drumlins is known as a swarm, they are located between the extensive tract of peatland known as Roundstone Bog and the coast on Ballyconneely Bay. They were formed beneath an extensive ice sheet as it ground its way south-westward, from an ice dome cantered on the Connemara Mountains, c. 20,000 years ago.

Drumlins are composed of a deep layered deposits of sand, gravel, mud and clay; a composition which allowed for development of very good soils. These soils constitute the very best of the naturally free draining soils in the area, characteristic recognized millennia ago by the very first farmers in the region.

From as early as 6000 years ago farmers in Connemara have built their settlements, buried their dead and erected their ritual monuments on and around these drumlin ridges. In 1812 the new town of Clifden was built on and around two drumlins as were the villages of Tully and Tullycross in North Connemara.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, drumlin were invariably a favoured nodal points for small farm settlements, with the farm house and out buildings being built on the drier lower slopes and on the sides of the drumlins. Settlement drift is a feature of drumlin settlements, at various points in time people moved around these fertile pockets from the top, to the slopes, to the base of the drumlins.

Many archaeological monuments can be found throughout Connemara on or adjacent to drumlins. One can see a prehistoric enclosure, ancient trackway and associated field walls on and around a drumlin ridge at the Marconi site in Derrygimlagh townland, at the Northern edge of Roundstone Bog. At Derryinver in the Renvyle Peninsula, a drumlin is crowned by both a line of standing stones and a stone circle, some 3500 years old. At Streamstown two miles north of Clifden a large drumlin is crowned by both an Early Christian Ringfort and on a subsidiary height a group of prehistoric standing stones.

Early pre-famine OS map sources for Emlaghmore confirm that the drumlin ridge under consideration here had a clustered settlement on its south-western slope and it also had single settlement on its northern edge, the latter is still extant but it is ruinous state. Both of these locations were abandoned in the immediate post-famine era, after 1852 as the population collapsed.

The drumlin was devoid of settlement for a time before it was once again resettled by new families during the early-20th century as part of the work of the Congested Districts Board founded in the 1890s. The organization was tasked with improving the economic and infrastructural deficits in the very poorest areas in the West of Ireland. New roads, harbours and farm settlements were established. New holdings were created, which involved sweeping away the old settlements and field walls.

Two families, the Goulds and the McDonaghs were given land here, with the Goulds occupying the western half and the McDonaghs in the eastern portion of the drumlin. The McDonaghs farm was built on the sheltered south-eastern face of the ridge overlooking a new salmon river built in the 1850s. They managed to raise a large family here and the last person to live in the house was a McDonagh man.

Historical background

In the aftermath of the Famine Emlaghmore townland and the Dohulla Fishery was bought from the Encumbered Estates Court by a Dublin man, Mr J Knight Boswell, he invested heavily in the area, much of it focussed on reconstructing an entire new drainage system, solely for the purpose of fishery improvement at the Dohulla Fishery. To this end a massive project was carried out which involved the building of dams, the cutting of drains, the building of a hatchery and the digging of an entirely new river channel 900m long called 'The new cut'. The purpose of these changes was to reverse the flow of the river in order to create a new salmon fishery in what was hitherto a seatrout fishery. As part of this pioneering project a number of new houses were built to house the various staff members involved in the protection and management of the fishery.

The fishery was sold in 1856 to Mr William Young and later leased to Thomas and William Glover. They added a complex of spawning beds and artificial rearing ponds just below the existing dwelling.

The Irish Church Mission Society also established an agricultural school house at Emlaghmore House around this time. The Fishery and Dohulla House was acquired by the Tinne family in the early 20th century and they continued to invest and develop the fishery, they still live in Emlaghmore Lodge and own the fishery to this day.

One of the now ruined building associated with the fishery is very similar to the McDonagh farm house, both utilize a plinth in the construction the houses.

Conclusion

Drumlins have been nodal points for settlements over thousands of years they have experienced episodic waves of settlement mirroring both the climatic and economic regimes of the time. Both of Emlaghmore drumlins had well established farm clusters by mid-19th century these were abandoned as a result of the famine and settlement resumed again in the early-20th century.

The rebuilding of the old McDonagh farm house and the creation a new house in this secluded location will have no negative impact on the heritage of the area. The house itself is well sheltered by a variety of trees and shrubs. Its profile will sit well below the skyline and it will be only be visible to one other house in the immediate area. This house is located at the base of the adjacent drumlin ridge some 800m to the west of the proposed development.

Every effort should be made to use local stone in the building of the wall so that it is in keeping with the local igneous geology. Any extensive ground works should be monitored by an archaeologist given the importance of drumlin for settlement over the millennia.

Appendix A: Maps and Photographs



Fig 1: Site Location showing existing house. (Archaeology.ie)



Fig 2: Aerial View showing existing house (Archaeology.ie).

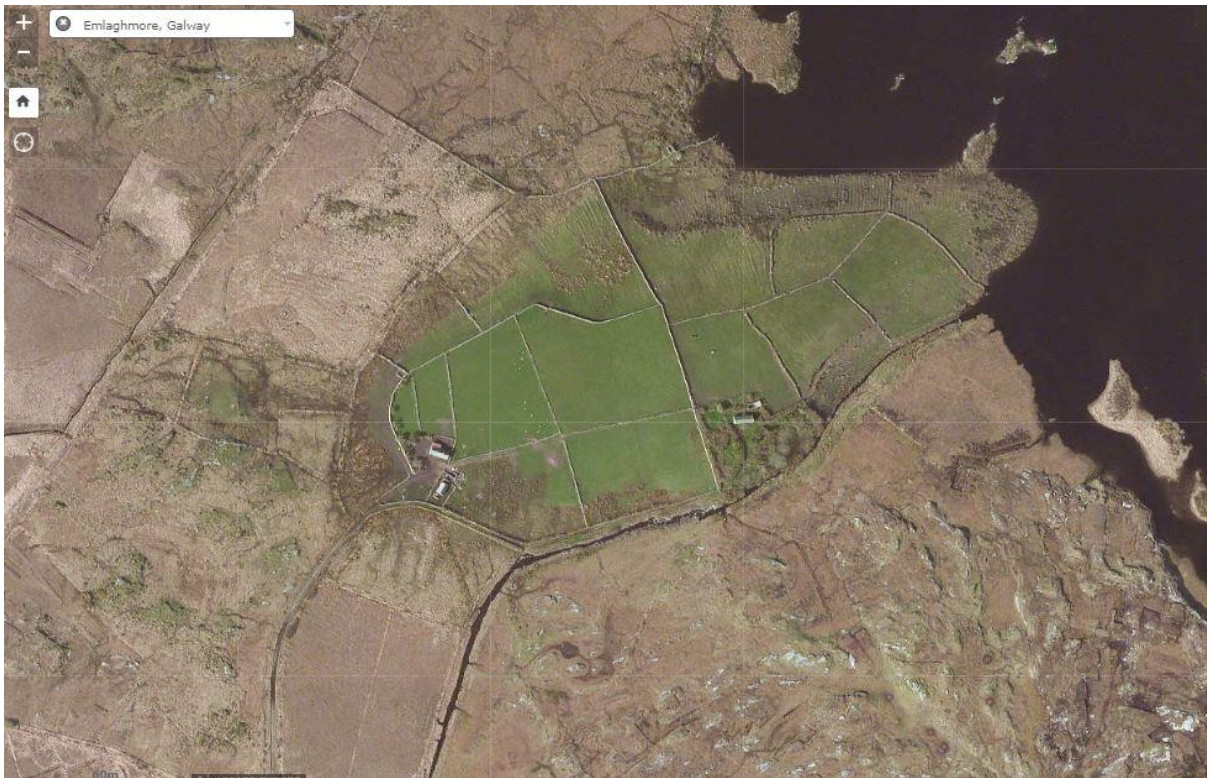


Fig 3: Aerial View showing existing house (Archaeology.ie).

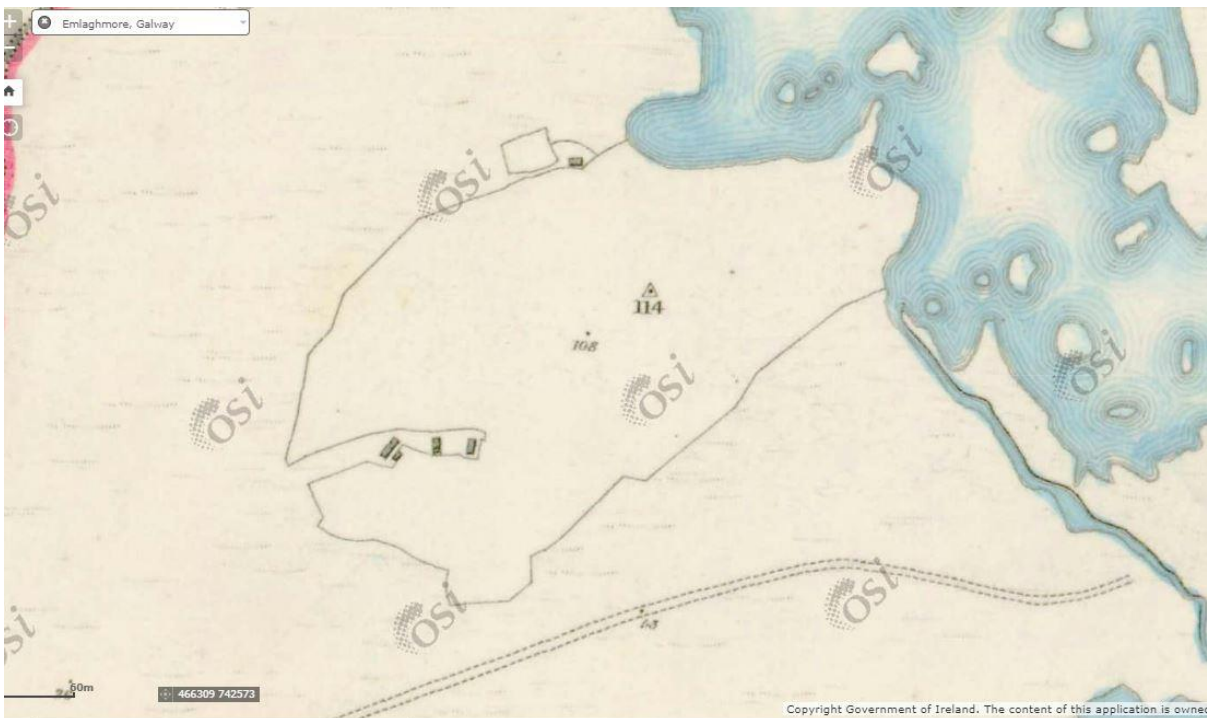


Fig 4: 1st Edition OS Map showing location of site – no structures visible. (Archaeology.ie)

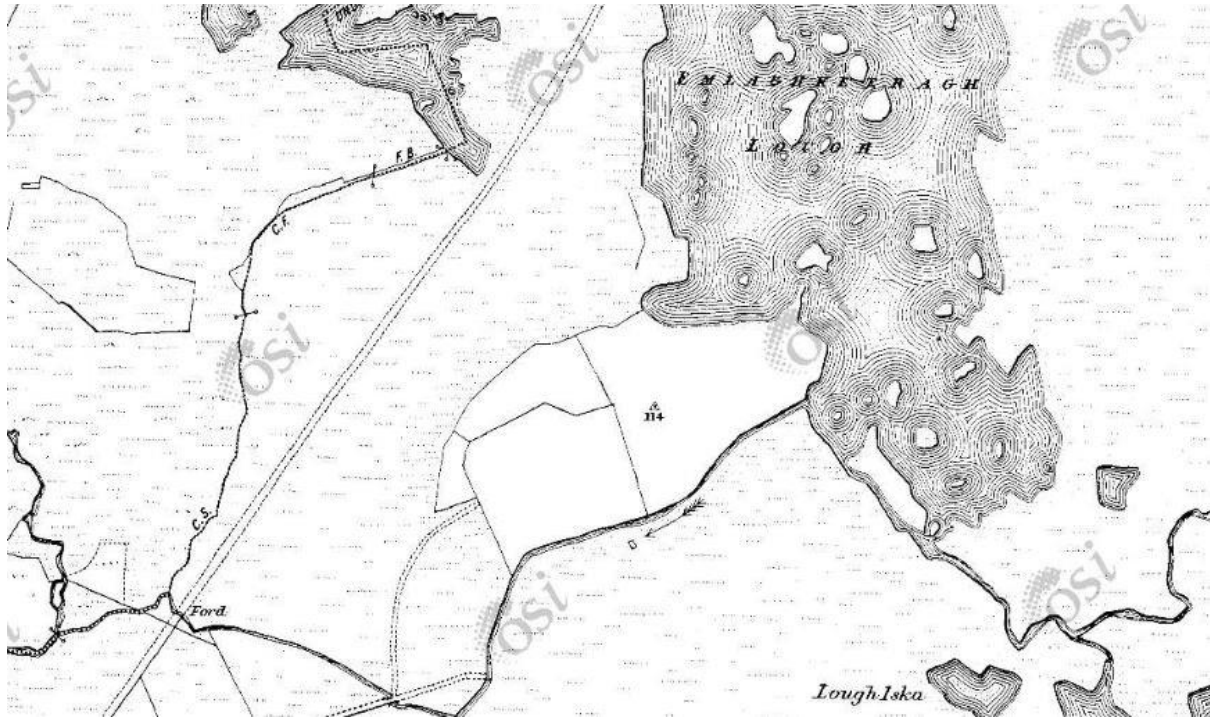


Fig 5: 2nd Edition OS Map showing location of site - No structures visible. (Archaeology.ie)



Fig 6: Site Photograph (2020) View of house from the South East, 'The new cut' river is at the base of the drumlin.



Fig 7: Site Photograph (2020) distant view of the drumlin, with its two settlements the westerly farm was occupied by a family by the name of Gould in the 1911 census. It was built a little lower down the drumlin slope than the Mid-19th century settlement it replaced. The McDonagh house built mid slope, it is in the middle of the picture.



Fig 8: Site Photograph (2020) view from the rear of dwelling, with nearest visible inhabited house in view 800m distant at the northern edge of the other drumlin in the townland. A populated coastal strip settlement in Callow townland is more than 1.5 km away to the south.



Fig 9: Site Photograph (2020) View to the south east across the bog to Dolan Hill. Loch Mháimhín at right.

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Surname	Forename	Townland/Street	DED	County	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation	Religion	Literacy	Irish Language	Relation to Head of Household	Marital Status	Specified Illnesses	Years Married	Children Born	Children Living
McDonagh	Thomas	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	69	M	Co Galway	Farmer	Roman Catholic	Cannot read	Irish and English	Head of Family	Married					
McDonagh	Bridget	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	60	F	Co Galway		Roman Catholic	Cannot read	Irish and English	Wife	Married		40	12	9	
McDonagh	Margaret	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	19	F	Co Galway	Farmers Daughter	Roman Catholic	Read and write	Irish and English	Daughter	Single					
McDonagh	Daniel	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	16	M	Co Galway	Farmers Son	Roman Catholic	Read and write	Irish and English	Son	Single					
McDonagh	John	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	11	M	Co Galway	Scholar	Roman Catholic	Read and write	English	Son	Single					
McDonagh	Celia	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	76	F	Co Galway		Roman Catholic	Cannot Read or write	Irish and English	Head of Family	Widow					
McDonagh	John	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	45	M	Co Galway	Farm Labourer	Roman Catholic	Cannot Read or write	Irish and English	Son	Single					

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Surname	Forename	Townland/Street	DED	County	Age	Sex	Birthplace
McDonagh	Thomas	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	69	M	Co Galway	
McDonagh	Bridget	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	60	F	Co Galway	
McDonagh	Margaret	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	19	F	Co Galway	
McDonagh	Daniel	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	16	M	Co Galway	
McDonagh	John	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	11	M	Co Galway	
McDonagh	Celia	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	76	F	Co Galway	
McDonagh	John	Emlaghmore	Bunowen Galway	45	M	Co Galway	

Fig 10: Emlaghmore Census 1911 – McDonagh Family

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Surname	Forename	Townland/Street	DED	County	Age	Sex
Gould	John	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	73	M
Gould	Mary	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	59	F
Gould	Michael	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	35	M
Gould	Festy	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	28	M
Gould	Tom	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	20	M
Gould	Patk	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	18	M
Gould	Willie	Emlaghmore	Bunowen	Galway	16	M

Fig 11: Emlaghmore Census 1911