

Slieve Aughty Walking Trails

Siúlóidí Sliabh Eachtaí

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The walking route, known locally as the ‘Old Curragh Road’ follows the line of an old trackway laid down as central spine road in the late 18th or early 19th century through the townlands of Gortnagleav, Kilnagappagh and Gortnamannagh West. An abandoned clachan or farm village can be seen across a small valley to the south. This village has an intricate network of roads and boreens accessing individual houses. Typical of the rundale system of farming, of which this clachan is a prime example, gardens or garrai are situated close to the houses. The garrai were used for sowing potatoes and vegetables. The clachan complex also contains a lime kiln.

A sub-circular livestock enclosure lies adjacent to the settlement. This would have served primarily as a pen for cattle, but also would have functioned as a collecting point for animal dung, used as manure for the gardens.

Additional to the clachan itself are well laid out field systems arranged in long stripes demarcated by low boulder walls. These fields form part of the infield system associated with communal farming. Crops such as potatoes and corn were sown in the infields. Relict cultivation ridges can still be seen in many of these fields.

Away from the clachan a series of outfields occur, these were used mainly for grazing, but could also be brought under cultivation when required. An important aspect of this form of farming was the availability of commonage used for summer pasturage. The cows and other livestock were removed from around the clachan in summer and taken to the commonage. This is referred to on the continent as transhumance but is known as booleying in Ireland.

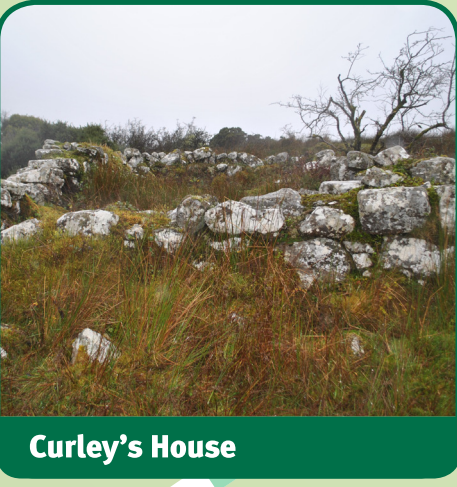
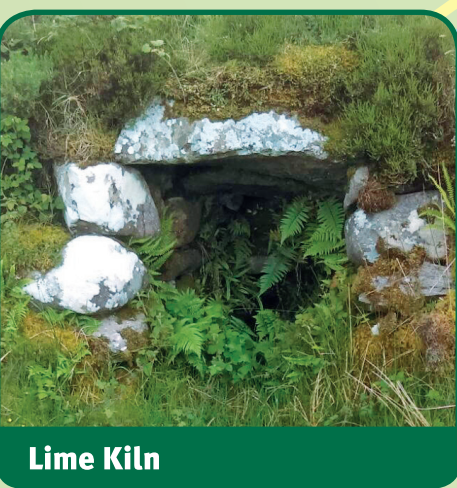
Curley's House stands adjacent to the route and is an example of single house settlement. It is thought that the last of the Curley family vacated the area around the time of the Famine. The house is set within a network of small gardens and larger fields with evidence of tillage in the form of cultivation ridges.

A large lime kiln occurs near Curley's house on the edge of the walking route. Limekilns are a common feature of the Sliabh Aughty uplands as lime was essential for improving the acid rich soil.

A cluster of booley huts lived in during the summer by those tending the cows can be seen across the valley from Curley's House. They consist of small doughnut-shaped hut circles of c. 3 metres in diameter. Their presence within the infield is of particular interest, as it shows that this area was used as commonage in the past prior to the clachan being built, the booley grounds would normally be located at a distance from the clachan.

Linear field systems can be seen to the north and south of the track. This is reflection on the amount of tillage that occurred here in the past. Small cairns of stones, the result of field clearance, can also be discerned in the landscape.

A standing stone and a nearby hut circle, both of which appear to be of prehistoric date, shows a much earlier zone of settlement dating back to at least the Bronze Age in this region. Other features such as wells, corn drying kilns, an unfinished millstone and a number of turf drying stacks are all evidence of a former way of life in the area.



LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

Please adhere to this code in any trip to the outdoors

- 1 Plan Ahead and Prepare

2 Be Considerate of Others

3 Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- 4 Leave What You Find

5 Dispose of Waste Properly

SAFETY AND COMFORT

For your comfort please ensure you have:

- Good hiking footwear

• Rain gear

• Drinks
- Trail food

• Carry a mobile phone

• Take care near streams in flood

• Take care crossing a mountain pass

• Be aware the trail passes through remote countryside

• Inform someone about your intended itinerary

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 999 OR 112

Your Safety is your own responsibility. No liability can be accepted by the producers of this walks programme, for any loss, injury or damage to or in respect of any property or persons in connection with these trails.



KEEP DOGS ON LEADS



NATURAL HERITAGE

Today the landscape around the walking route is an intricate mosaic of blanket bog, heath, upland grassland, pockets of willow and gorse scrub, and wet rushy fields. It's hard to imagine now that this wild landscape was once farmed for livestock and tilled to support many families in the hills.



Bog Cotton

Bogland is the main habitat on the Slieve Aughties and it probably started to develop between 7000 to 5000 years ago. Peat accumulates slowly in wet, acidic environments such as in the Aughties. If you look closely, many beautiful and some unusual plants can be found on the bog - Ling and Bell Heathers, insect-eating plants such as Sundews and Butterwort, and numerous types of Bog Moss that provide a rich tapestry of colour.



Bog Moss

The very rare bird of prey, the Hen Harrier, breeds in the Aughties and lucky walkers might see these elegant birds in flight swooping over the hills hunting or looking for a mate. Skylark and Meadowpiper are commonly spotted in the hills but others to look out for are Stonechat, Snipe and Merlin (another bird of prey). Horses are now regularly seen in the Aughty hills and Fallow Deer.

The Kilchreest and Peterswell Conservation and Gun Club are working on a highly successful conservation project to increase the numbers of Red Grouse in the hills in this area. These birds are easily recognisable and are sometimes flushed by walkers because they use the heather for cover.



Red Grouse

Much of the area around the Old Curragh Road has been managed as a commonage since it was part of the Roxborough Estate owned by the Perse's in 19th and early 20th C. It is now managed by the Roxborough Commonage Association.



With special thanks to:
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Kilchreest Castledaly Community Development Group.

For more information on the area go to: www.slieveaughtytrails.com

Designed and Illustrated by Shelly Gannon – Eye in the Clock ©