



## Ancient Sites & Buildings. Bagenalstown Area

Vol 2, Site 1

**Donore**

Donore or *Dun uabhadri* – *the fort of pride*.

The Archaeological Inventory of Co Carlow lists at least four circular enclosures or raths in this townland, of which three were discovered in recent times following aerial surveys ie numbers 259, 260 and 261. The fourth coincides with Site 481 Kilmolappoge Church. The inner ring of this ringfort is shown in the O.S 6" Survey map of 1839. Sadly these remains were obliterated in recent times.

The adjoining townland of Kilcarrig has three ringforts listed (276, 277 & 278). A short distance further north at Ballymoon can be found a further three ie 224, 225 & 231. The presence of so many raths in this area would indicate a settled population over several millenia.

Most of the raths/ringforts locally vary from simple protected farmsteads or corrals for livestock to those built for defensive purposes. The fort examined at Donore is very similar to a much smaller version at Dunleckney & Rathduff.

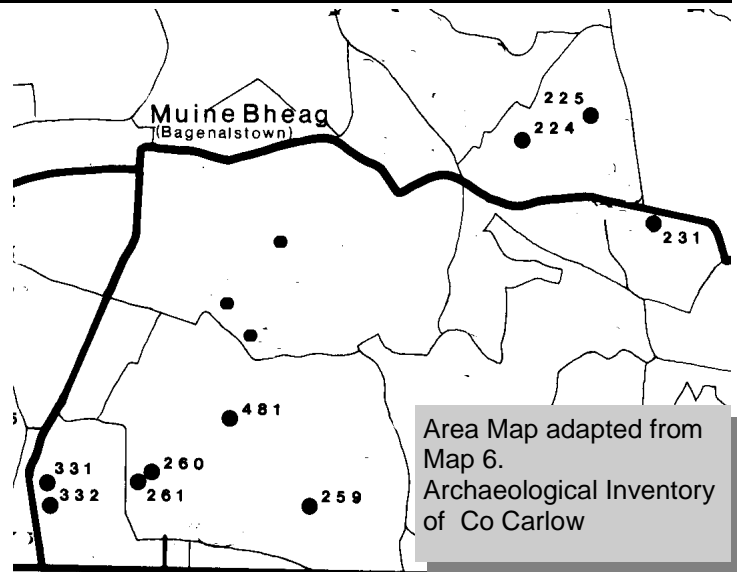
During the pre-Christian period to which Donore fort belongs, Celtic hillforts were common. Their construction would indicate an unsettled period of our history, when the local population built them as places of refuge and a last line of defence.

The use of earth ramparts, water filled ditches and palisades to make hostile entry difficult is obvious. However the presence of the offset (permanent) bridges to span the ditches is not. The offset bridges and gates force the enemy invader to expose their flank thus making an easier target for the defenders' missiles.

However the only historical reference is to a later period. According to the Annals of the Four Masters; in the year 1042 AD, a preying excursion by the Ui Cinnsealaigh into Ui Barraiche territory resulted in the complete slaughter of the invaders, including the heir to the lordship of the Ui Cinnsealaigh.

During the summer of 2003 our archaeological survey of Site 481 used non intrusive methods. It was found that the ringed fort referred to earlier was once triple ringed with two water filled ditches between each ring, fed by the stream now piped underground. The outer ditch was found to be dry.

- St Lappan founded a monastic settlement here close to the ancient rath in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. Later in the 10<sup>th</sup> c stone monastic buildings were built within the earthen banks of the earlier ringfort.



### 481 DONORE

OS 16:14:1 (272,103) OD 100-200 27119,15989

*Ecclesiastical remains* Named as Kilmolappoge Church and Holy Wells on ; 839 OS 6" map, probably a mapping error, since this name is given to another site (no 480) on the 1938-9 ed. Present remains consist of irregular but possibly originally circular platform (47.7m E-W, 54, NNE-SSW) enclosed by fosse with external bank, best preserved at W (D of fosse 1m below ext bank; W 6m; ext H of bank 1.3m, W c.7m). Causeway at NNW. Foundations of rectangular granite structure (Dims c.11m x 5m) off centre of enclosure, orientated ESE-WNW with possible entrance at W.

16:69

21-8-1987

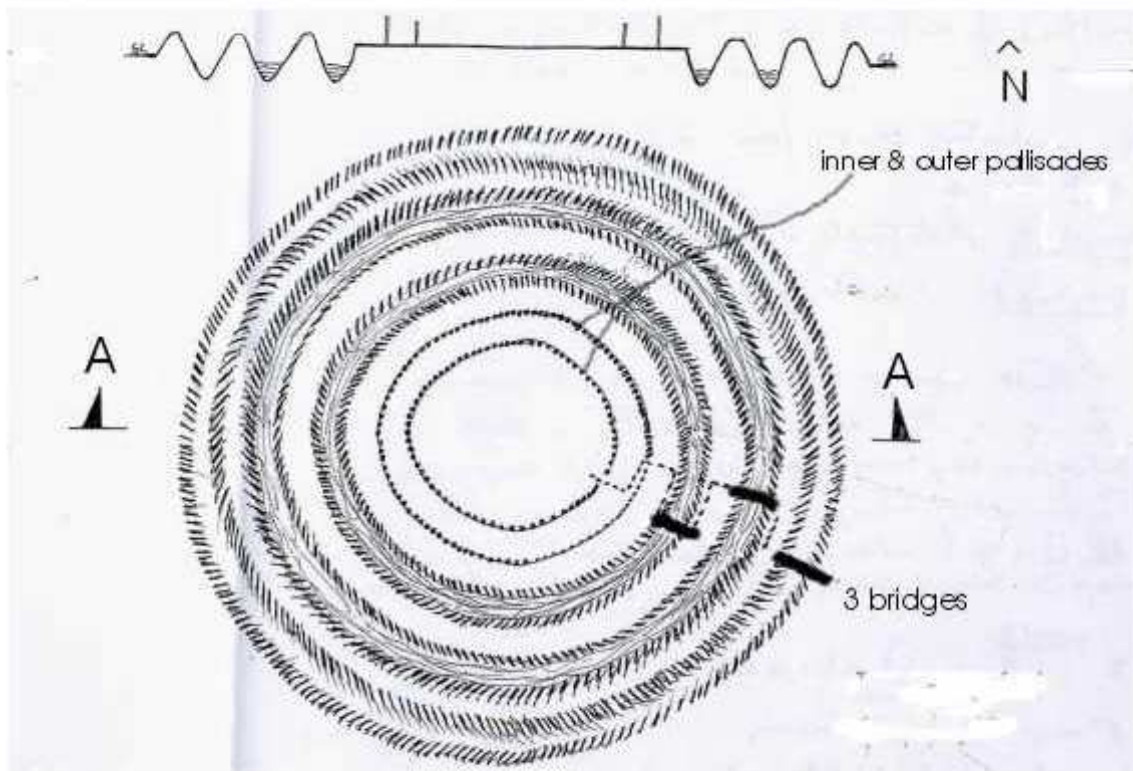
Extract from the Archaeological Inventory listed under Early Christian Churches

The central part of the fort rested on a raised earthen platform with two timber palisades; the inner being 76' (23 m) and the outer 100' (30 m) in diameter. The palisades were about 10' (3 m) high with apparently an empty space between them. Stacked against the inner palisade was a clay rampart about 5' (1.5m) high with a flat top 2' (0.6 m) wide. This formed a platform all the way around (except at the gate) allowing the defenders to see over the palisade. Entrance gates were offset and faced roughly to SE. The total diameter of the fort measured between the outer banks was approximately 248' (75.5 m)

The site was occupied for defensive purposes from the 1st c BC to the 2nd c AD. No traces of buildings within the fort were found to having existed during that period. • See Vol 1, Issue 4. *Medieval Monasteries. Parish of Bagenalstown. Feeley & Sheehan. 2003*

## Ringfort at Donore

### Sectional Elevation on A-A



**Key;** Shaded rings are water filled ditches  
Clear areas are clay banks.

The fort seems to have been built by the local community as a refuge in time of trouble, a last line of defence. Celtic forts of this period in Britain were intended to accommodate the women, the elderly, children and livestock as well as the defending warriors.

A person entering the fort would need to take a total of eight changes of direction to reach the centre, requiring them to cross three bridges and walk a short distance along the banks for a short distance each time.

This was probably a deliberate ploy to slow down strangers entering the fort or to force an attacking army to expose their flanks to the missiles of the defenders.



Markout on site of location of palisades and the bridges spanning the three ditches.

The white line represents the path taken by a person leaving through the inner gate (between the gate posts) turning left, crossing the bridge, turning right along the raised bank, then the second bridge is crossed, turn left, along the bank and cross the third bridge to reach the surrounding field.