



An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta

Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

National Monuments Service

Managing and Protecting Ireland's Archaeological Heritage

Information on our functions and services:

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland

The Archive Unit

Conservation of National Monuments

The World Heritage Unit

Monuments Protection Unit

The Underwater Archaeology Unit

The Planning and Licensing Unit

The Photographic Unit

National Monuments Service

The National Monuments Service (NMS) is part of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Its role is to preserve, protect and promote Ireland's unique archaeological heritage.

NMS advises the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on legislative and policy issues relating to archaeological heritage.

NMS is responsible for regulating archaeological excavations, the use of detection devices for archaeological purposes and underwater archaeology, including diving on historic wrecks and other underwater archaeological sites.

NMS is also responsible for the archaeological management of national monuments in State care. Conservation works and provision of visitor services at these monuments is undertaken by the Office of Public Works.

NMS advises planning and other consent authorities on development proposals which might have an impact on archaeology.

NMS also provides advice to a wide range of bodies, including other government departments and agencies and local and community organisations, on archaeological issues that may arise from proposals as varied as major infrastructural development to works in historic graveyards.

Individual units within NMS are responsible for the different functions that contribute to that overall mission. These are:

- The Archaeological Survey of Ireland
- The Archive Unit
- Conservation of National Monuments Unit
- Monuments Protection Unit
- The Underwater Archaeology Unit
- The Planning and Licensing Unit
- The Photographic Unit
- World Heritage Unit

Legislation

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 provide for the protection of monuments and archaeological sites and the regulation of archaeological works. All known archaeological monuments are entered into the statutory Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and any person proposing to carry out works at or in relation to a recorded monument must give 2 months written notice to the Minister.

Works affecting a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or of a Local Authority (including digging or ploughing, conservation works or any disturbance of the ground within, around or in proximity to the national monument) may only be carried out with the prior consent of the Minister.

Monuments of national importance may also be protected by a Preservation Order, which prohibits any interference with the monuments without the prior consent of the Minister. All archaeological works associated with approved road developments (motorways and dual carriageways) are required to be carried out under directions issued by the Minister. The Director of the National Museum of Ireland is a statutory consultee on the issuing of excavation licences, consents and ministerial directions.

More detailed information on the NMS can be obtained from its website: www.archaeology.ie



Dún Eochla Stone Fort, Inis Mór, Aran Islands, Co. Galway

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI)

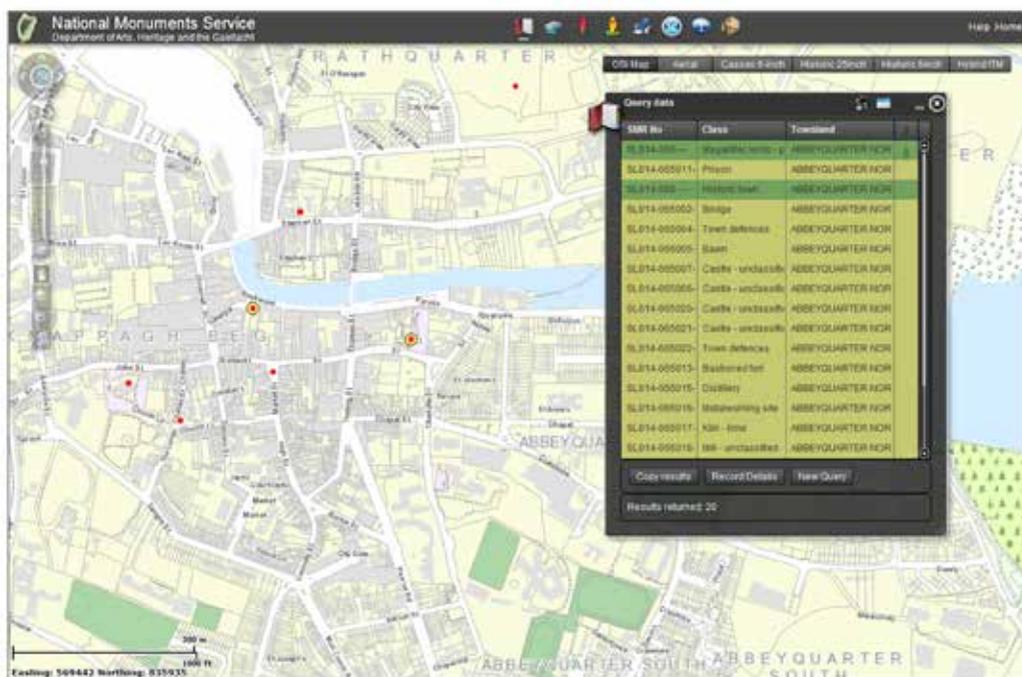
Since its inception in 1963, the **Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI)** has focused on recording monuments dating from before AD 1700, along with more recent sites selected according to their interest or merit. A Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was issued for all counties in the State between 1984 and 1992. The SMR is a manual containing a numbered list of all certain and possible monuments accompanied by 6-inch Ordnance Survey maps (at a reduced scale). An Urban Archaeology Survey was completed in 1995 and contained reports on historic towns dating to before AD 1700 with a view to delineating zones of archaeological potential. Both the SMR and the Urban Archaeological Survey reports were issued to all planning authorities.

The SMR formed the basis for issuing the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) - the statutory list of recorded monuments established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. The RMP was issued for each county between 1995 and 1998 in a similar format to the existing SMR. However, the RMP differs from the earlier lists in that, as defined in the Act, only monuments with known locations or places where there are believed to be monuments are included.

The information collected by the ASI is made available to the public both in published format as Inventory Volumes and online. The compilation of an Inventory Volume involves field inspection and descriptions of all monuments. Twenty-one volumes, covering sixteen counties, have been completed. The records of the ASI can be accessed on the NMS website www.archaeology.ie and this has become the primary portal for the dissemination of information to the public.

Archive Unit

The **NMS Archive** consists of an extensive body of material relating to the archaeological heritage of the State. The main collections is made up of Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) reports on some 150,000 archaeological sites within the State; excavation reports on the results of licensed excavations; reports and sources on underwater archaeological sites, including the Historic Shipwreck Archive, information on islands, ports and harbours and an extensive photographic collection of almost 500,000 images of monuments. The Archive records may be consulted by appointment by emailing nmarchive@ahg.gov.ie



ASI webpage with site locations and details indicated

The large archive and supporting database are managed by the NMS and the records are continually updated and supplemented as additional monuments are discovered. Included in the update are the results of the extensive peatland surveys commenced in 1991. In total, there are in excess of 137,800 records of monuments in the national database.



Hill of Tara, Co. Meath

Conservation of National Monuments

There are approximately 750 monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. These monuments are managed by the Office of Public Works. The NMS plays a major role in the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of these monuments. The archaeological input includes survey, excavation, research, interpretation and publication.



Poulnabrone Portal Tomb, Co. Clare

A fractured portal stone at this Neolithic portal tomb required emergency conservation works in the mid 1980s. Excavation of the chamber of the tomb at this time revealed the disarticulated remains of at least 36 men, women and children. A range of objects had been buried with these people including stone tools, stone beads and a decorated bone pendant. The earliest burials date to about 3,800 BC, making this one of the earliest megalithic tombs in the country.



Trim Castle, Co. Meath

This monument, the largest medieval castle in Ireland, was excavated in the 1990s prior to major conservation works. The excavations revealed that the initial fortification was a ringwork castle with timber buildings. Dendrochronological analysis of oak timbers found in the walls of the keep has allowed the phases of the keep to be accurately dated.

The World Heritage Unit

This Unit is responsible for the State's two World Heritage Sites (Sceilg Mhichíl and Brú na Bóinne) and has extensive dealings with UNESCO. It works closely with the management teams and other stakeholders involved in the World Heritage Sites and on related publications, including dissemination of research information to the wider public. It is also responsible for liaison with stakeholders from sites on the World Heritage Tentative List.



Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry

This early medieval monastic settlement, which was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1996, has been the subject of conservation and consolidation works since the early 1980s. Excavation, carried out in tandem with these works, has revealed details of the layout of the earliest monastery and evidence for modifications that have taken place over the following centuries.



Brú na Bóinne, Co. Meath

Brú na Bóinne in County Meath is located between the towns of Drogheda, Co. Louth, and Slane, Co. Meath. The renowned passage tombs of Knowth, Dowth and Newgrange, with their kerbs and orthostats highly decorated with prehistoric art, belong to the Neolithic period, c. 3000 BC.

Each year at the winter solstice (21 December) the rising sun penetrates a deliberately designed roof-box, allowing a beam of light to illuminate the back chamber of the tomb at Newgrange.

The Monument Protection Unit

The **Monument Protection Unit** responds to reports of threat or damage to monuments including underwater sites and wrecks. It also deals with notices given of proposed work at or in relation to monuments recorded under section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 or historic monuments entered in the Register of Historic Monuments under section 5 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987. The assistance and co-operation of the public is crucial to the protection of our archaeological heritage as most archaeological sites and monuments are in private ownership and many are located in remote areas.

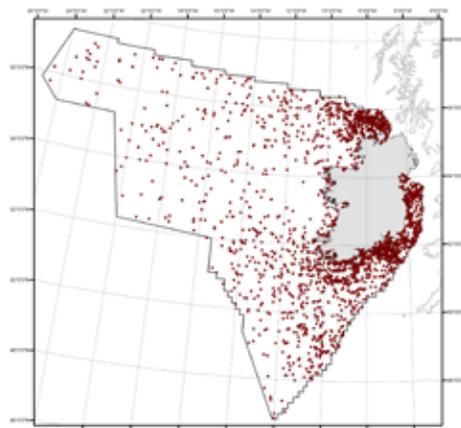
Anyone wishing to report possible damage to a monument or proposing to undertake work at or in relation to a monument should contact the National Monuments Service by phoning 01-631 3800 or e-mailing nationalmonuments@ahg.gov.ie



Repair works at collapse of graveyard wall, Co. Cork

The Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU)

The **Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU)** has a broad work brief. This includes the compilation of an inventory of the underwater archaeological resource and the management and protection of this part of Ireland's heritage. Amendments made to the National Monuments Acts in 1987 and 1994 specifically address the protection of underwater archaeology. All wrecks over 100 years old and underwater archaeological sites and objects are protected. A dive and/or detection device licence is required if diving on or surveying for underwater archaeology.



Right: Map showing known locations for shipwrecks in Ireland's designated waters.

Shipwreck Inventory of Ireland

The UAU maintains a record of all shipwrecks around the coast of Ireland with over 12,000 wrecks being recorded to date. This is accessible to the public through the Archive Unit. The UAU also liaises with the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) on its work on the Irish National Seabed Survey (INSS) and with the GSI and the Marine Institute on their joint INFOMAR project - Integrated Mapping For the Sustainable Development of Ireland's Marine Resource - by assisting with the identification of shipwrecks and underwater sites.



Possible Spanish wreck, Rutland Island, Co. Donegal: 16th - 17th Century AD.

Research, Survey and Developmental Assessment

The UAU undertakes surveys of known and recently discovered wreck sites. Other types of sites from coastal, riverine and lacustrine environments are also identified, surveyed and recorded. Past projects include the survey and excavation of the 1588 Spanish Armada wreck *La Trinidad Valencera* in Co. Donegal, a late-16th or early 17th century possible Spanish wreck near Rutland Island, Co. Donegal, and the remains of a Dutch East Indiaman in County Mayo.

The UAU works closely with the National Museum of Ireland and has, for example, undertaken a detailed survey of Tully Lough, Co. Roscommon, which produced the magnificent 8th century Tully Lough Processional Cross.

The UAU advises on development applications, a large number of which include foreshore, aquaculture or dumping at sea licence applications.



Logboat, Lough Oughter, Co. Cavan: 10th Century AD.

The Planning and Licensing Unit

The **Planning and Licensing Unit** provides input and advice on archaeological heritage protection to planning and other authorities in relation to individual planning and other development applications, projects and plans. The Unit also gives archaeological advice to community groups, companies and agencies on projects in areas such as tourism, agriculture, forestry, peat extraction, graveyard maintenance and the Rural Development (LEADER) Programme.



Excavation at Churchtown Upper, Dundrum, Co. Dublin

Planning Regulations

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is a statutory consultee in relation to potential developmental impacts on archaeological heritage. This allows the Minister to recommend that archaeological considerations are taken into account when decisions are being made on planning applications.

The Environmental Impact Assessment process is central to the protection of the archaeological heritage in the case of large-scale development and in the screening of the impacts of smaller work programmes. In recent years the Department has put in place Codes of Practice with agencies involved in the delivery of large-scale infrastructural projects which, by their nature, can have significant archaeological implications.

The Planning and Licensing Unit endeavours to ensure that developmental impacts on archaeological heritage are avoided or reduced. Where this is not possible, archaeological remains are preserved by record, i.e. through archaeological excavation and scientific recording of all features and deposits identified.



Collapse of town wall, Co. Cork (requiring ministerial consent)

Ministerial Consents and Directions and Licensing

Works at a National Monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or a Local Authority, or to a monument protected by a Preservation Order, can only be carried out with the prior consent of the Minister. Excavations are regulated through formal licensing and consent systems and, in the case of approved roads schemes, by means of Ministerial direction. Necessary post-excavation work includes analysis of sampled materials and deposits, conservation of excavated archaeological objects and publication of excavation results.

Photographic Unit

The **Photographic Unit** undertakes all major photographic assignments for the NMS. Originally set up in 1955, the Unit's main function is to record conservation works at national monuments and to provide images for publications, exhibitions and websites. Its large collection of photographs of sites and monuments is catalogued and maintained as a resource and record for the future. The Unit's archive is now approaching 500,000 images, with the core collection comprising images of national monuments in State care. Recently the Photographic Unit has changed from an analogue to a digital workflow system and can now provide all images in digital format.



National Monuments Service

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Custom House
Dublin 1

Phone: 00353-1-631 3800

Fax: 00353-1-8882689

Email: NationalMonuments@ahg.gov.ie Website: www.archaeology.ie

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter



For a full list of publications see www.archaeology.ie