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## Archaeological Conservation Works at Murrooghkilly Cairn, Co. Clare.



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**Client:** Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark  
Tourism for Conservation  
LIFE Project (LIFE11/IE/922)

**Date:** December 2017



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- 

**Please note...**

That the archaeological recommendations, mitigation proposals and methodology followed in this report were first set out in a method statement approved by the NMS and the NMI by the issue of an archaeological licence to cover the works. These are similar to those used on previous similar projects approved by the Archaeological Planning and Licencing Unit National Monuments Service, Room G50, Custom House, Dublin 1. The National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, The Planning and Development Act 2000 (plus any amendments) and the most recent EPA guidelines were consulted. Guidelines and plans issued from time-to-time by the statutory, regulatory and other bodies have been consulted. These are listed in the reference section of this report. These works followed a separate Conservation Plan report (Coyne *et al* 2017).

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**Acknowledgements**

ÆGIS acknowledges the information supplied by the client, the client's agent, and information gathered from the RMP.

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**Cover Image**

Murrooghkilly cairn November 2017 after specialist conservation works to later cairn.

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## I. Abstract

This report details the archaeological conservation works associated with the reinstatement of cairn stones on the recorded archaeological monument, classified by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland as a cairn, at Murrooghkilly, Co. Clare. The works were undertaken by hand by the writer and other archaeologists. The cairn is in private ownership.

The reinstatement and conservation works were undertaken on November 9 and 16, 2017. No archaeological features or artefacts were discovered during the archaeological conservation works.

The archaeological dimension of this project was funded in full by the client. A framework for similar works at other monuments in the Burren region has been suggested.

## II. List of Figures, Plates and Tables

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### III. Abbreviations and Terms Used

<b>ASI</b>	Archaeological Survey of Ireland
<b>Barony, Parish, Townland</b>	These terms refer to land divisions in Ireland. The barony is the largest land division in a county, which is formed from a number of parishes. These parishes are in turn made up of several townlands, which are the smallest land division in the country. The origins of these divisions are believed to be in the Early Medieval/Christian period (AD500-AD1000), or may date earlier in the Iron Age (500BC-AD500)
<b>c</b>	Circa (about)
<b>DCHG</b>	Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht
<b>E</b>	East
<b>First Edition</b>	This relates to editions of the OS 6-inch maps for each county. The first edition map completed for the area dates to the early 1840s and this is referred to in the text as the 'First Edition'
<b>KM</b>	Kilometre
<b>M</b>	Metres, all dimensions are given in metres or part of a metre, unless otherwise stated
<b>N</b>	North
<b>NGR</b>	National Grid Reference
<b>NIAH</b>	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
<b>NMI</b>	National Museum of Ireland
<b>NMS</b>	National Monuments Service. Regulatory body with the DCHG with responsibility for archaeological heritage
<b>OS</b>	Ordnance Survey
<b>OSI</b>	Ordnance Survey of Ireland
<b>OSNB</b>	Ordnance Survey Name Books
<b>PO</b>	Preservation Order
<b>PS</b>	Protected Structure
<b>Refs</b>	References
<b>RMP</b>	Record of Monuments and Places. An update of the older SMR, (sites and monuments record), on which all known archaeological sites are marked and listed in an accompanying list. The sites marked afford legal protection under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014. The record is based on the 6-inch map series for the country and is recorded on a county basis. Each archaeological monument on the RMP has a unique code known as the RMP number (see below)
<b>RMP Number LI</b>	This code is the number of the site on the RMP constraint map. It begins with the county code, for example CL for Clare, the 6-inch sheet number, followed by the number of the archaeological monument on that sheet
<b>RPS</b>	Record of Protected Structures
<b>S</b>	South
<b>Sheet</b>	This relates to the 6-inch map for each county, which is divided into sheets.
<b>SMR</b>	Sites and Monuments Record. The precursor of the RMP, the SMR now commonly relates to the archive paper files of known archaeological monuments maintained by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI). These files are arranged according to RMP number
<b>TB</b>	Townland Boundary
<b>Tr</b>	Trench
<b>W</b>	West, or where used with a dimension, width
<b>ZAP</b>	Zone of archaeological potential. This refers to the area indicated around a historic town in the Urban Survey and the RMP

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background (fig. 1)

This project consisted of the re-instatement by hand of stones on a recorded archaeological monument, the cairn at Murrooghkilly, Co. Clare, by the writer as part of the conservation of the monument. A record of the monument had been made prior to the works (Coyne and Lynch 2017) and a Conservation Plan was formulated (Coyne *et al* 2017) prior to any intrusive works being undertaken. The monument comprises two discrete entities, an earlier larger stone cairn surmounted by a later smaller cairn, which was likely originally a dry-stone structure. The smaller later cairn was subject to a separate conservation programme which involved the re-building of its dry-stone structure by hand by a specialist mason, who is also an archaeologist (Curran 2017), prior to the works described here.

At the request of the client the writer submitted a notification to the relevant bodies in advance of the works to the cairn, and in addition, applied for an archaeological licence to undertake and monitor the works described in this report. The works undertaken were concentrated on the western side of the monument where the stone fabric had become loose and dislodged due to erosion, although loose stone on all sides of the monument were gathered and replaced on the cairn. The purpose of the works was to reinstate, by hand, the loose stone to the cairn, in order to halt or slow its deterioration. A measured drawing was then made after the reinstatement had been undertaken. This work was suggested as a measure of the Conservation Plan (Coyne *et al* 2017).

The works described in this report were undertaken on November 9 and 16 2017 and were carried out by the writer, F. Coyne, M. Lynch, C. Lynch and E. Lynch, all of whom are professional archaeologists.



## 1.2 Location and the Existing Environment (figs 1-2)

The Murrooghkilly Cairn, an archaeological monument, is situated in the townland of Murrooghkilly, the parish of Gleninagh, and the barony of Burren in the county of Clare. The monument is situated on the top of a mountain on Black Head and is an important landmark in the wider landscape.



Figure 1. Location map for Murrooghkilly Cairn (Discovery Series No. 51 OSI, 1 box = 1km, north to top of map).





Figure 2. Aerial view of Murrooghkilly Cairn and other archaeological monuments in vicinity indicated by the red dots (after [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) with amendments).

### 1.3 Historical & Archaeological Background

A Conservation Plan was undertaken in advance of this part of the project, which detailed the historical and archaeological background of the monument and is not repeated here (Coyne *et al* 2017).

### 1.4 Previous Archaeological Work

Following the Conservation Plan and site inspection, the later smaller cairn was re-built using a dry-stone technique by a professional mason and archaeologist. He has detailed his work in a separate report (Curran 2017).

### 1.5 Protected Structures

There are no protected structures on or in the vicinity of the monument.

## 2. Archaeological Conservation Works

The conservation works were undertaken on November 9 and 16, 2017. It comprised the collection of loose stones, by hand, by several archaeologists, and the reinstatement of those stones onto the body of the larger cairn. No additional features of an archaeological nature were encountered during the undertaking of these conservation works, and no artefacts were recovered.

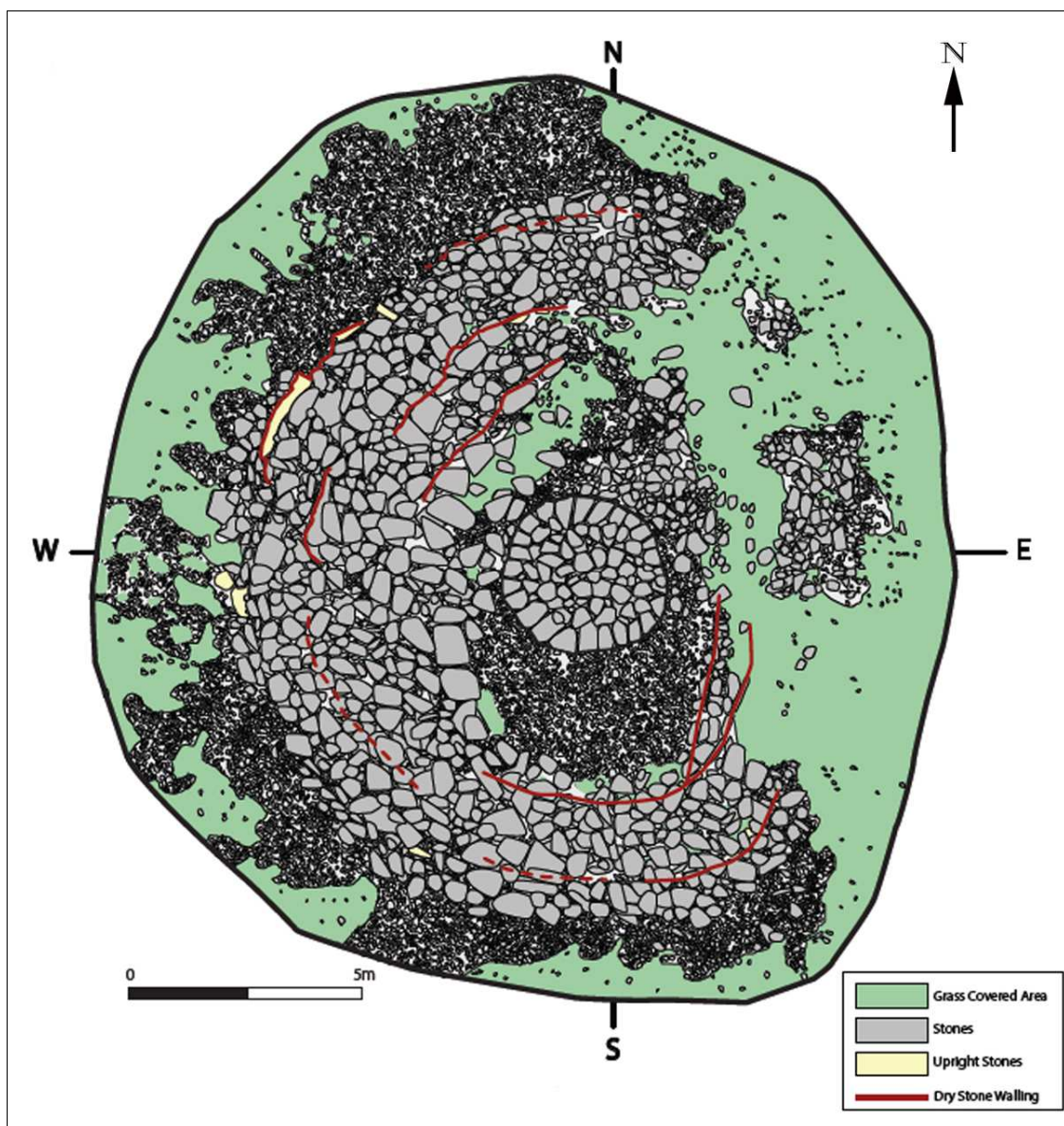


Figure 3. Plan of monument after re-instatement works undertaken (can be compared to pre-conservation plans in Coyne et al 2017).

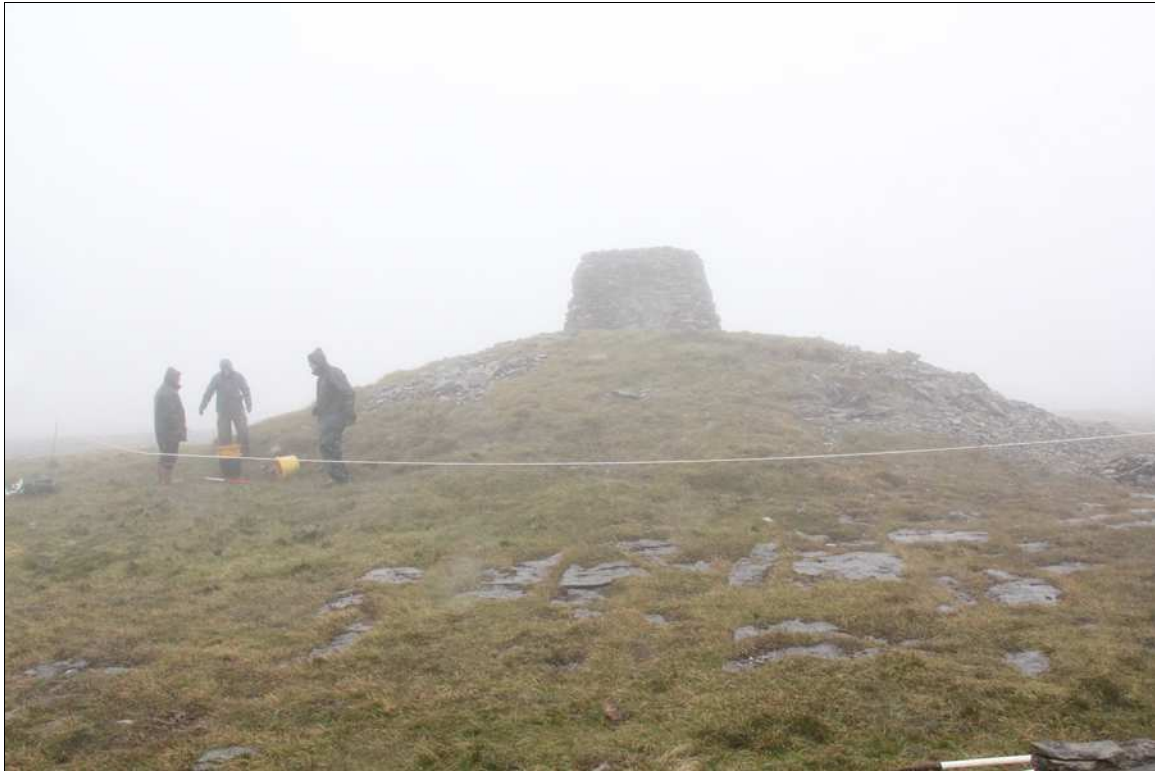




**Plate 1. Gathering of displaced stone, from SW**



**Plate 2. Gathering of displaced stone, from E**



**Plate 3. Work in progress in rain, from S**



**Plate 4. Piles of stone around perimeter, from W**





**Plate 5. Piles of stone, ready for placing on cairn, from W**



**Plate 6. Piles of stone at S of cairn, from W**





**Plate 7. Piles of stone at S of cairn, from SE**



**Plate 8. Work in progress, from SW**





**Plate 9. Work in progress, from W**



**Plate 10. Work in progress, from SW**





Plate 11. Photographing of replaced stone for plan, from S



Plate 12. Soil exposed beneath small stones, from N





Plate 13. Work complete, from S

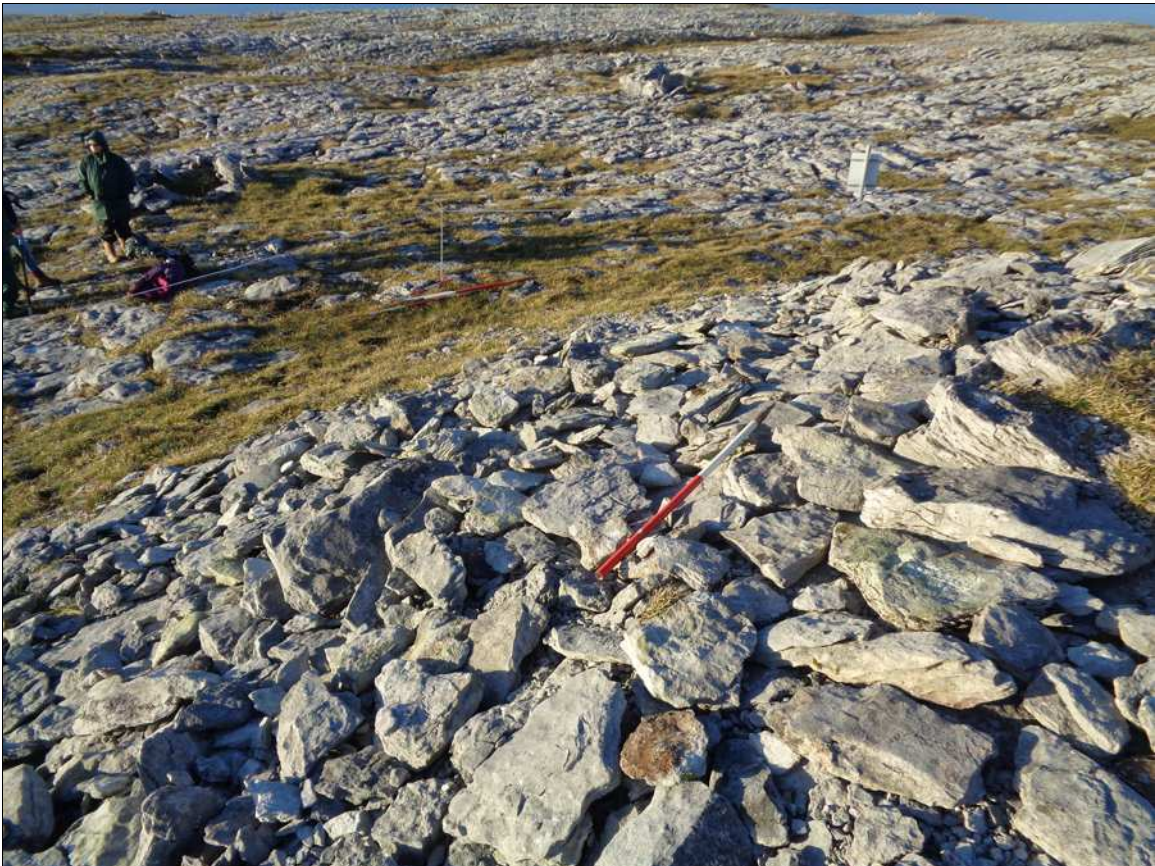


Plate 14. Large stones replaced on cairn, from SE





**Plate 15. Work complete, from E**



**Plate 16. Completed works, from NW**



### 3. Conclusions

No archaeological features were noted during the archaeological conservation works and monitoring on the cairn at Murrooghkilly, which comprised the gathering by hand of loose stone cairn material, and its reinstatement on the cairn by hand. No artefacts or material suitable for dating was recovered during the works.

The archaeological dimension of this project was funded in full by the client and this report fulfils their archaeological obligations regarding the archaeological monitoring.

## 4. A Suggested Framework Approach to the Conservation of Similar Monuments

The Murrooghkilly Cairn conservation project was the first time this sort of conservation project was carried out by the client. As such, it could be regarded as a pilot study. Following its successful completion, and on the basis of the methodologies employed, a best practice framework can now be suggested, which might be followed in the conservation of other archaeological monuments in the Burren region.<sup>1</sup> It is very important to acknowledge that currently in the Republic of Ireland each archaeological monument is first considered, unique, and so monuments are considered on a site-by-site basis, even when they are of same classification, for example, a cairn. This is because the location, siting, past history, and uses through time, of those sites may differ significantly. Having said this, there is no requirement to 're-invent-the-wheel' when a monument requires conservation and a number of similar broad steps can be followed. Having undertaken this pilot project, a suggested framework for conservation at other monuments has been formulated, which is detailed in table 1:

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<sup>1</sup> The philosophical basis for monument conservation is set out in the Conservation Plan (Coyne et al 2017).

**Table 1. Suggested framework approach to the conservation of similar monuments.**

<b>Task Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Potential Interested Parties</b>
<b>1.</b>	Identification of monument for conservation, and listing of interested parties, including landowner where monument is in private ownership. Inception meeting to introduce process to interested parties. Seek funding for conservation plan (task 2).	Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark steering committee; landowner; local stakeholders
<b>2.</b>	Appointment of consultant to carry out desk-based with site inspection Conservation Plan (following template outlined Coyne <i>et al</i> 2017), to formulate series of conservation tasks (which should be measurable, achievable and time-framed into short, medium and longer term actions). Seek funding for conservation plan actions.	As above, and in some cases a public meeting using a facilitator to chair, may be useful to ascertain status of monument in locality
<b>3.</b>	Begin process of scheduling and actioning conservation tasks, such as for example, monument re-instatement, etc.	Steering Committee
<b>4.</b>	Seek advice at this early stage from NMS to ascertain if advance archaeological works such as testing or excavation are required, if so, appoint archaeologist and apply for relevant licences to undertake work.	Steering Committee NMS NMI Archaeological consultant
<b>5.</b>	Ensure that other disciplines are considered where required, for example, flora and fauna, water quality <i>etc.</i> A screening exercise would highlight these issues, and where reports are required, appoint specialists to undertake studies.	Steering Committee Heritage Officer local authority Dept of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
<b>6.</b>	Following advance archaeological works, undertake conservation actions, such as reinstatement (which may require further separate permissions) and appoint specialists as required.	Steering Committee
<b>7.</b>	Undertake works and complete reports	Specialist(s)
<b>8.</b>	Review entire conservation actions by returning to Conservation Plan to ensure actions are fulfilled. Review and revise this framework if required.	Steering Committee

## 5. Project References

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[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)  
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[www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie)  
[www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie)

## 6. Signing-Off Statement

**Archaeological Firm:** ÆGIS ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED

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**Client:** Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark  
Tourism for Conservation  
LIFE Project (LIFE11/IE/922)

**Signed:**



For ÆGIS ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED

**Report Status:** Final

**Dated:** December 2017

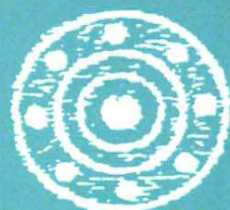
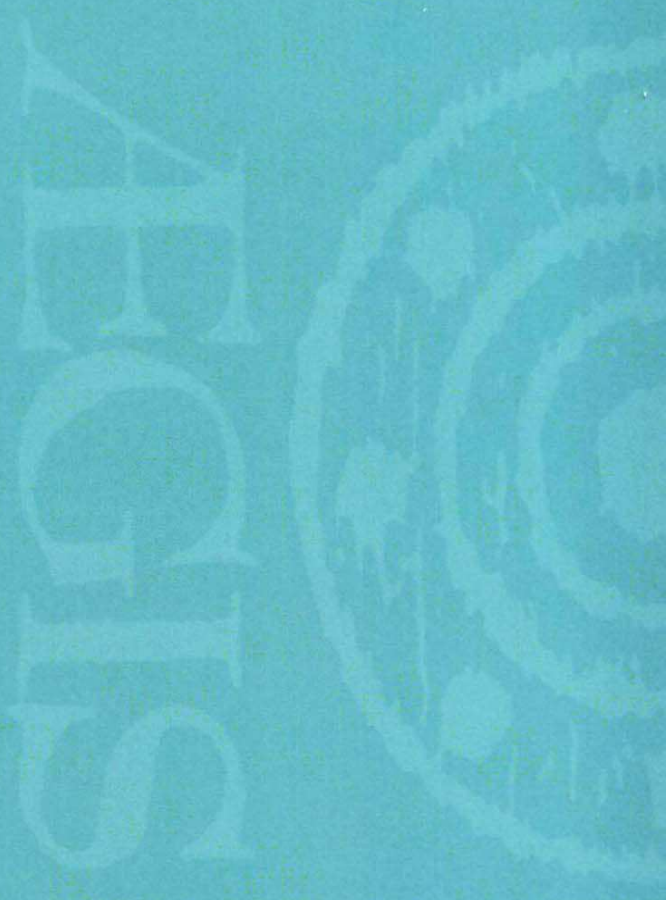


## Annex 1 Details for summary on [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie)

Date Excavation Completed: (this is a critical date acc. to guidance)	Conservation works completed on site 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
Site Name, as per licence Townland or address	Murrooghkilly
Site Type: Period and Type or 'No Archaeology Found'	No archaeology found
ITM, E,N	516541/710578
SMR No (if appropriate)	CL002-001---
Excavations No use new 7 digit system as per licence	17E0498
Description Max 500 words, use links if you want	After recording and a conservation plan, works were undertaken by the writer to gather loose stone and re-instate it on the archaeological monument known as Murrooghkilly cairn in order to arrest erosion on the monument. No additional archaeological features or artefacts were found during the course of this work.
Images: 1 map and one image per licence	
Licence Holder	Frank Coyne
Date on Licence	17 October 2017
Aegis ref.	89-20
Upload date	December 2017

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