

## Stabilization of the Medieval Church Building on Church Island, Lough Garadice, County Leitrim.

Carried out in 2006-2007 by the Ballinamore Development Company and the Everan Foundation, with the cooperation of Coillte, and the support of grants from The Leitrim County Council, The Everan Foundation, The Heritage Council, and members of The Breifne Historical Society.

Masonry contractor: Séan Moffatt (Dromod)                      Archaeologist: Diarmuid O'Seaneachain, Ph.D.  
Invaluable assistance was provided by Patrick Bradley, Gerry and Tomás McNiff, and Padraic Mulligan.  
Charcoal from ancient mortar was dated by The Chronology Centre, The Queens University, Belfast.

*This page:* Interior of east end of north wall (photo by P. Bradley).



*Second Page (photos by P. Bradley)*

Top left: Interior of west gable (12-13<sup>th</sup> century), showing entrance and possible loft window.

Top Right. Exterior of east gable (15<sup>th</sup> century) showing east window.

Lower left: Exterior of south west wall (15<sup>th</sup> century) showing original east window (12-13<sup>th</sup> century).

Lower right: Interior of east gable (15<sup>th</sup> century).



## <sup>14</sup>Carbon Dating of the Medieval Church on Lough Garadice

Six samples of mortar were collected from the church on Church Island in Lough Garadice. Samples 1-5 were taken by Dr. Diarmuid O'Seaneachain in November 2006, sample 6 was taken by Mr. Sean Moffatt in July 2007. Dr O' Seaneachain separated carbon (charcoal residue) from each of the samples. The Chronology Centre at the Queen's University Belfast determined <sup>14</sup>C dates for these samples as described (Reimer et al 2004). Results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. <sup>14</sup>Carbon Dating of the Medieval Church on Lough Garadice**

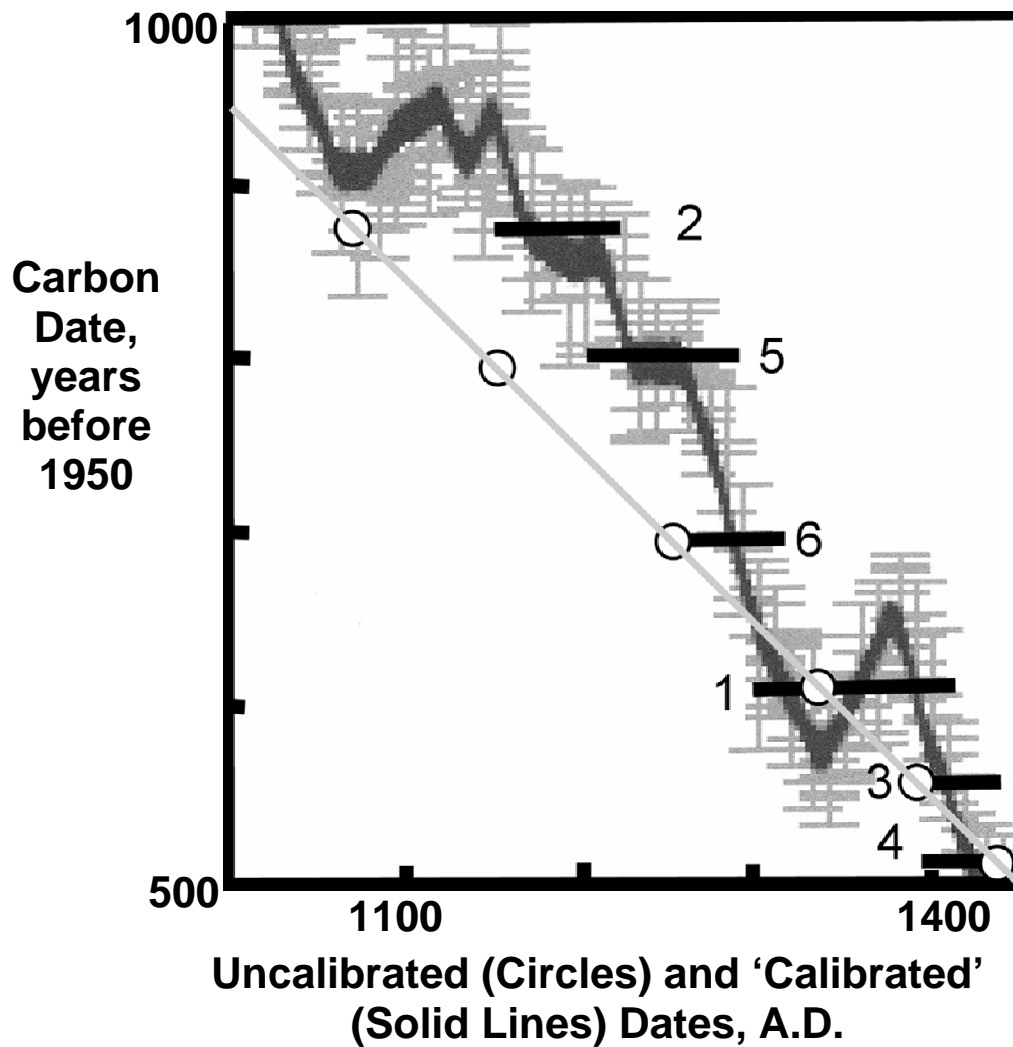
#	Source	Uncalibrated Date	'Calibrated' Date
1	Lower part of West entrance	1336 ± 30	1360 ± 60
2	Behind a stone vandals removed from south interior W gable.	1071 ± 29	1200 ± 30
3	South-east exterior, NE plinth	1394 ± 29	1410 ± 30
4	East gable interior wall	1448 ± 33	1420 ± 30
5	East window wall surface	1150 ± 31	1250 ± 50
6	Top of west gable	1274 ± 36	1310 ± 40

Calibrated and uncalibrated dates deviate to a greater extent for the earlier samples than for the later ones. (Figure) Calibrated dates are used here. The most reliable sample is sample 2, taken from deep within the wall of the West gable. The date found for this sample supports the earlier conclusion of Conleth Manning (based on construction details) that the western portion of the building was built in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Also, samples 3 and 4 consistently support his earlier conclusion that the east end of the building was constructed near the start of the fifteenth century. The relatively early date for sample 5 is taken to indicate that earlier material (such as old roof timber) was used to produce mortar used in finishing the east window. The relatively late dates for samples 1 and 6 indicate that the west gable was repaired after construction, perhaps when the eastern addition was built.

The church was enlarged during the period for which activities on this island are extensively documented in the Vatican archives (Earley and Boyle, 1996). The dating of the earlier portion shows that this building was constructed while the O'Rourkes (whose original base was near the island) were prominent in Irish affairs.

### References

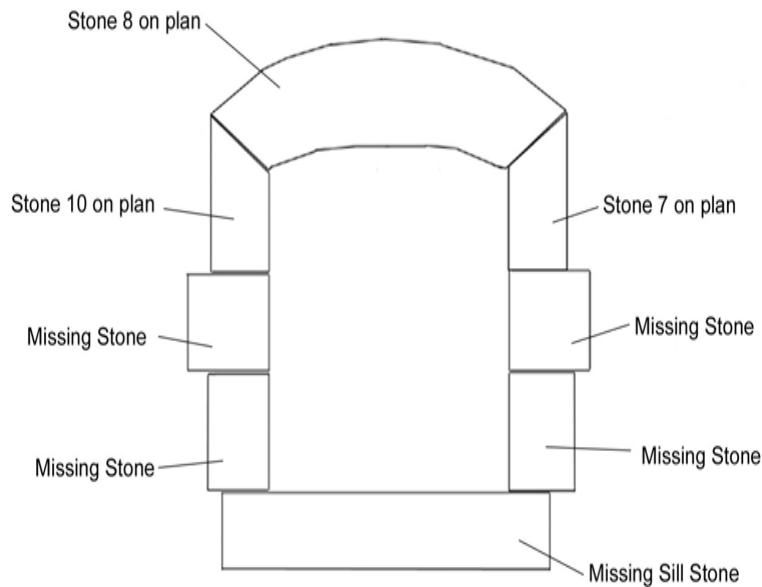
- Joseph E. Earley, Sr. and Leonard E. Boyle, O.P (1999). "Conflict over the Rectory of Cinal Luachain in the Fifteenth Century," *Breifne: Journal of the Breifne Historical Society*, 9:103-113.
- P.J. Reimer et al. (27 co-authors) (2004) "IntCal04: Terrestrial Radiocarbon Age Calibration, 0–26 Cal Kyr BP" *Radiocarbon*, 46: 1029-1058.



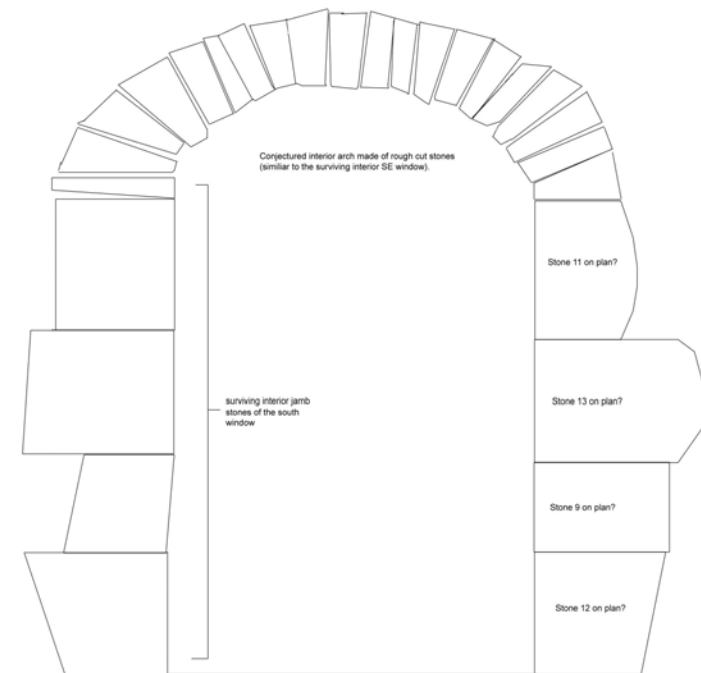
Calibration data and fitted calibration curve taken from Reimer et al, 2004 (p.1058).

## The Second South Window

The eastern third of the south wall is standing to full height, and contains an intact window. (Conleth Manning suggests that this window may have originally been part of the original east window that was replaced in the fifteenth century.) The central and west portions of the south wall are partially fallen. A mound of stones lies outside those sections of wall. Parts of the frame of a second south window form the western edge of the intact portion of the south wall. Several cut stones lie directly outside that partial window frame. In the sketches below, Dr. D. O'Seaneachain has indicated how shaped stones he located just outside the fallen window may have originally fit together in the window frame of the second south window. A few shaped stones needed to complete that window have not yet been found --- but some may lie in the pile of stones outside the wall.



Conjectural reconstruction of the exterior of the south window of the church on Church Island, Garadice Lough, Co. Leitrim (Not to scale).



Conjectural reconstruction of the interior of the south window of the church on Church Island, Garadice Lough, Co. Leitrim.

## Bullaun Stone

Located on Church Island, Lough Garadice, County Leitrim.



Photo by J. Earley, March 29, 2007

A 'bullaun' is a deep hemispherical cup hollowed out of a rock. "Bullaun Stone" refers to the rock itself, which can have many bullauns in it, although many have only one. The original purpose of bullaun stones is thought to have been to grind grain or herbs for cooking and medicinal purposes.

It is generally thought that bullaun stones date from the Bronze Age (~2000BC to ~500 BC, in Ireland). These stones have an undisputable association with water, and with worship of the Celtic fire goddess Brigid, and her successor, St. Bridget. Many are found in association with early churches and holy wells. Their presence at so many early Christian sites places them as being of massive importance to the pre-Christian inhabitants of Ireland -- something that the Church was eager to assimilate.

Ritual use of some bullaun stones (reputedly for both blessing and cursing) continued well into the Christian period. Recent Irish folklore held that rainwater that collects in such a stone had healing powers, especially for warts. To gain a cure, it was said, a person had to visit the stone three times in the same week and go around the stone seven times on bare knees.

(Adapted by J. E. Earley from [http://www.megalithomania.com/show/glossary\\_item/25](http://www.megalithomania.com/show/glossary_item/25) and <http://www.ipcc.ie/BOAgardenguide.html>.)