

10. ISSUES

In order to develop recommendations for the management of Drumanagh it is necessary to identify the current and potential threats that could adversely affect the significance of the site. The greatest threat to the integrity of the promontory fort is the existing unauthorised use of the site for motorbike scrambling. The rutting and scarping of the banks and ditches and consequent upcast of material is having a cumulative detrimental effect on the monument itself and possibly disturbing artefactual material. It is hoped the recent delineation of the site with protective fencing and signage will obviate this threat.



Plate 54: Assessment of motorbike damage courtesy of local resident, Derek Redmond

10.1. Archaeological Research

The primary characteristic of Drumanagh is its international, national and regional significance as an Iron Age promontory fort with connections to the Roman world. However the unauthorised nature of the retrieval of the material culture of the site; the multi-phase nature of the available evidence and the gaps in knowledge surrounding the apex of its use presumed to be the Iron Age mean that we actually know relatively little about the site, and its uses.

The investigations thus far involving non-invasive techniques, although limited by area, have identified several previously unknown archaeological sites within Drumanagh and in the wider coastal landscape. Given the development of technology and techniques it is imperative that the full extent of Drumanagh is subject to micro-topographical analysis and geophysical survey. This is a baseline step in informing future research. An essential next step is the ground-truthing of the geophysical survey, that is, the test-excavation of anomalies to determine their nature and extent. This would allow for the retrieval of samples for dating and artefacts for analysis. This is important in establishing the date of use of the site. While much emphasis has been placed on the Roman finds from the site and it is an extremely important element, the multi-phase nature of the site must not be overlooked.

The timing, funding and extent of archaeological investigation are also issues. Geophysical survey will be enabled by the removal of the high vegetation that is presently covering the site, which is in itself subject to seasonal constraints. The sheer size of the site means that any survey would be an expensive undertaking and there is a lack of facilities should excavation be undertaken. Given the nature of ownership there also needs to be a facility for community involvement and interaction with any archaeological investigations.

10.2. Vandalism

Vandalism and graffiti of the Martello tower and extant remains of ancillary elements are a concern. The iron bars of the gates have been removed. A rope is continually replaced to provide unauthorised access to the interior. Fires have been lit against the remains of the privy and the number of cans indicate the immediate vicinity of the tower is being used for anti-social activities.

10.3. Unauthorised Metal Detecting

Metal detecting without a licence issued by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is illegal. To be in possession of a detection device at a monument protected under the National Monuments Acts is illegal without prior written consent of the Minister. To use a detection device to search for archaeological objects without prior consent from the Minister is illegal. There have been numerous reports of unauthorised metal detecting at and in the environs of Drumanagh in recent years.

10.4. Health & Safety

The privy to the east of the Martello tower has been in a ruinous condition for a number of years with no roof and only one partial wall of the structure is now still standing, the east gable wall. It is in a precarious condition. There is a stepped diagonal crack clearly visible on the inner face running from the top corner on the southern side to halfway down the wall on the northern side. The lower half of the wall is missing stones from the northern corner leaving the upper section top heavy. This combined with the diagonal crack and the fact that the mortar around some stones at the base and top has eroded raises serious concerns about the structural stability of the surviving section of this building. Fingal County Council is working with the National Monuments Service, to source an engineering solution.

10.5. Threat to fabric

The full extent of the threat to the fabric of the Martello tower is unknown as it has not been subject to a structural survey. It is currently evident that some of the stone coping to the parapet of the Martello is damaged or missing and requires repair. The external render around the base of the tower and around the door opening has come away and the joints of the roof of the tower are grass-filled and may require remortaring.

The south and west gate piers and immediately adjacent walls are contemporary fabric that requires attention including vegetation removal, cleaning and mortaring of joints, and stone replacement in order to arrest further deterioration.

10.6. Grass Management

The height of grass and other vegetation across the monument is obscuring the topographical features of the site, constraining access and impeding necessary archaeological research. There are currently three options proposed for the grass management, each with potential issues.

1. Frequent cuts using a tractor and forage harvester until the grass has been brought to a manageable level.

This option will require ongoing maintenance and the number of cuts required will be costly. The frequent traversing of the site with machinery may have an adverse effect on the underlying topography of the site. It should be noted that grass cutting cannot be undertaken between the 1st March-31st August, of any given year, as per the Wildlife Acts.

2. Use of a specialised machine to remove dead grass, thatch and restore growth to normal grass growth in a minimal number of cutting events. It is proposed that the machinery be tested on the site in limited areas which will also provide information on vegetation regrowth.
3. Use of cattle grazing for a specified period of time.

Cattle have been used successfully for grass management at St Catherine's Park, Lucan. The size of the site should obviate any danger of poaching by the animals. However the presence of cattle and walkers would not be compatible and access to the site would need to be restricted over several months of grazing.

A recommendation of the 2017 ecological study (refer Appendix 3) is for the implementation of a mowing regime, in order to promote a more species rich grassland. Aiming for a summer sward height of 20-50cm it is noted that operating a different mowing regime in different sections of the headland, twice a year, would promote greater habitat and species diversity (Roughan & O'Donovan 2017, 16).

10.7. Biodiversity

While the site is currently not subject to statutory nature protection, it is locally known to be an area of value for wildlife. Multidisciplinary ecological surveys were commissioned during summer 2017. The surveys identified 32 bird species, two bat species, two mammal species and 46 species of vascular plant, including one non-native species. The grassland provides nesting habitat for ground-nesting birds, including Skylark and Meadow Pipit. The embankment and cliff edges, where dense, tussocky grasses cannot develop, incorporates a relatively species-rich grassland, which supports Common Lizard (Roughan & O'Donovan, 2017).

10.8. Access

The insertion of fencing in 2017 around the site is specifically to prevent inappropriate access to motorbikes and horses while directing pedestrian approaches. The desire lines of users are evident from the aerial photographs and have resulted in the establishment of narrow pathways around the perimeter of the site and to and from the Martello tower. The current entry points to the site also present difficulties; the north-western entrance is over a sloping bank which is often waterlogged and slippery underfoot. The western entrance from the laneway requires crossing the stream. This is possible where a bridging point has been provided, however many use the southern approach through the ditch. Ease of crossing here is dependent on rainfall, the level of which can result in flowing stream or a waterlogged ditch.

In order to improve the safety of the existing pathways and as grass paths are not sufficient in the long-term, it is proposed to insert 'no-dig' pathways to reflect the current usage patterns on the site. This may involve the removal of sod (c.2.5m in width) and the insertion of drainage which will have an impact on the underlying archaeology.

10.9. Wider Context of Access

The purchase of Drumanagh was an essential step towards the facilitation of the Fingal Coastal Way. This is a long-term aim of the Council to provide a coastal and walking amenity from Sutton to Balbriggan. The character and route of the Coastal Way has yet to be decided but it will cross Drumanagh to link to the cliff walk to Loughshinny and will impact on the underlying archaeology.

Those who currently visit the site walk from Rush, Loughshinny or from the nearby housing estates off the Skerries-Rush road. These routeways need improvement in terms of health and safety as;

- The cliff between Drumanagh and Loughshinny can be dangerous. There have been fall fatalities in the past.
- There is an issue with unauthorised access-many people access the site across privately-owned land
- The laneway to the site is often waterlogged and muddy in winter and overgrown with nettles and vegetation in summer making direct access difficult.
- Increased awareness and access to the site will also increase visitor numbers which may in turn lead to an increased demand for parking facilities in the vicinity. At present there is a small car park at the harbour in Loughshinny, another at the end of North beach in Rush and a carpark at the lodge in St Catherine's estate. However provision of car parking and facilities for Drumanagh may need to be addressed

10.10. Interpretation

Most site users have little knowledge of the international archaeological significance of the site although interest may be centred on the upstanding Martello tower. The site is lacking guides, interpretative signage or easily accessible reference material. This is further compounded by the gaps in definitive knowledge about the site that currently exist.

10.11. Potential Areas of Conflict

Fingal County Council as the owner of the site has a duty of care not only to the site as an archaeological monument and protected structure but to those that use the site. It needs to protect the

integrity of the site while ensuring the health and safety of its users and also providing access to the site.

11. OPPORTUNITIES

11.1. Archaeological Research

A collaborative research programme should be developed for the site. Drawing on existing research, using a multi-disciplinary approach this would be necessary for the long-term protection and interpretation of the site. There is enormous archaeological potential to match the scale of the site itself. Building on the work of the National Museum of Ireland and the Discovery Programme's *Late Iron Age and 'Roman' Ireland project*, an extensive geophysical survey of the site is required. This is an opportunity for collaboration and the use of innovative techniques and equipment. The nature and extent of any archaeological excavation will be driven by research objectives once the baseline information (e.g. the geophysical survey) has been completed. Funding is also a factor. Should the presence of Roman material be established is there a case for a large scale excavation? Given the multi-period nature of the site where should the academic emphasis be? Do we need to look at models like Vindolanda, Northern England which combines a volunteer excavation programme, with an education and tourism experience?

11.2. Community Participation

The local community must play a full and central part in the site. Fingal County Council's experience has been that it is helpful to engage local communities engendering a sense of ownership and thus ensuring protection for the site. There is an opportunity to develop a programme of events and experiences including field-walking, family days and community excavation. How best to incorporate the community archaeology element of any proposal for the site?

11.3. Education & Dissemination

Encapsulating human activity through the ages, geological and natural resources, Drumanagh provides multiple educational opportunities. Smaller and discrete elements of work can also augment the knowledge of the site. Having the flint material that has been recovered from the site analysed as an assemblage will add to the chronological knowledge of the site; likewise the pottery and other finds. The imminent publication of a catalogue of the metal detected metal finds will also add greatly to the knowledge of the Iron Age and 1st-3rd century occupation of the site. Subject to the permission of landowners a programme of community-based fieldwalking project in adjacent fields may add to the corpus of information about the context of the site. Local school children can be involved in fieldtrips to the site and citizen science programmes that can be developed.

11.4. Collaboration

Given the cultural heritage significance of the headland, the characteristic geology of the area, and the biodiversity, there are multiple opportunities for cross-discipline collaboration. The results of archaeological investigations and the research programme will inform the interpretation of the site. An advisory group of relevant experts, will be necessary to develop an archaeological research strategy and realise opportunities for funding and outreach. Collaboration opportunities with archaeological institutions and research programmes such as the European CHERISH project should be developed.

11.5. Architectural Heritage

The Martello tower is a highly visible landmark on the Fingal coastline. Unlike the majority of the surviving Fingal Martello towers, Drumanagh Martello tower has not been modified and appears in relatively good condition. Subject to a structural survey; the provision of safe access, the glazing of the windows to prevent birds accessing the interior and the replacement of the floor and door would provide a unique visitor experience. This is an opportunity to see a largely unmodified Martello tower in its original landscape setting, with the extensive views it provides.

11.6. Recreation

The context for Drumanagh is the coastline of Fingal, already popular with walkers and seaside visitors. The development of the Coastal Way will formally connect Drumanagh to Loughshinny and Rush. Drumanagh facilitates the completion of the Rush to Loughshinny section of the route.

11.7. Tourism

Given the number of archaeological and historical sites in the vicinity there is an opportunity to develop an integrated heritage trail, with smaller heritage loops linking to the Kenure demesne and the church and castle remains in St Catherine's. This could be combined with the geological and natural assets of the area to attract specialised and educational groups. The visitor experience to the region would be enhanced by information panels and digital tours to highlight the rich and varied heritage of the area.