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November 2007

MAGHEROSS, CARRICKMACROSS, CO MONAGHAN

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



This is an action of the County Monaghan Heritage Plan 2006-2010



This project has been funded by the Heritage Council and Monaghan County Council

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Office of Community and
Enterprise
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CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Conservation Management Strategy for Magheross, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan, provides a framework for the conservation and management of this historic ruined church and graveyard. The strategy draws together the immediately accessible background information about the place and sets out an understanding of that history and the significance of the place. Magheross is:

- **A sacred place of great antiquity**, a centre for worship and burial from perhaps as early as the 8th century AD;
- A site of **great historical and archaeological significance** for its collection of **gravestones, historical connections** and its **ruined church**. All these elements are of importance for future historic and archaeological research;
- A site **linked** to other ruined churches and graveyards in the area - a grouping which creates a **rich historical and archaeological context**;
- A site (including a nearby holy well) of **continued religious/devotional use**.

The Magheross Conservation Management Strategy includes an audit of constraints and vulnerabilities and identifies actions to militate against each constraint or vulnerability, all set within a broader conservation ethos or framework for decision-making.

These actions include:

- conservation of the walls of the ruined church;
- careful conservation of the site's gravestones, enclosures, ecology, access patterns and pathways;
- survey and eventual publication of the gravestones, supported by management of the graveyard to maintain the stones in their present condition for as long as possible, and;
- enhancement of visitor facilities and site presentation.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

Project name and number Magheross Conservation Management Strategy, Gifford Project 14537

Name of Site Magheross Old Burial Ground and Church



Fig. 1 Magheross church tower

Monument type(s)	Church and Graveyard
Legal Status and Source	Church (Recorded Monument [RMP]) Graveyard (Recorded Monument [RMP]) Church (Record of Protected Structures [RPS]) 41300334 Irish Yew in Churchyard (Conservation of Trees and Woodlands, Appendix CK3 of Monaghan County Council's Draft Development Plan 2007-2013)
SMR Reference and Description	Church MO031-035001- (see Fig. 1) Graveyard MO031-035002- The following description is derived from the published 'Archaeological Inventory of County Monaghan' (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1986. Date of upload/revision: 8 September 2006) 'Monastery is recorded as having been burnt in AD 685. Inscription in tower of present structure states 'this church was ruined in the Rebellion of 1641 and rebuilt in the year 1682'. Rectangular building with well-preserved square tower surmounted by conical cap at

W. Entrance through N wall of tower. Walls show signs of rebuilding. Stands in oval cemetery. (ITA Survey 1940)'.

Townland	Magheross		
County	Co. Monaghan	Barony	Farney
Country	Ireland		
NGR	Eastings	Northings	
	284090 (centre)	303240 (centre)	
Owner	Carrickmacross Town Council		
Client	Monaghan County Council and Carrickmacross Town Council		

Summary of the History of Magheross Magheross churchyard is located to the south of the town of Carrickmacross (Carraig Mhacaire Rois) in the townland of Magheross (Figs 2 to 5). Carrickmacross was a planned town by the Earls of Essex; the earlier and contemporary 'Irish town' is said to have been located around the church of Magheross. The churchyard is located at the southern end of Main Street, at the junction of the Kingscourt Road and a lane heading towards the Shirley Estate. The churchyard, which is ovoid in shape with a masonry enclosure wall, occupies the summit of a knoll, to the north of which lies Tobarinver holy well (St Finnbar's Well).

Property description, including boundary curtilage and associated structures

An Early Christian monastic establishment was settled in Carrickmacross. This was referred to as 'Cell Rois' (the church of Ros) in medieval documents and probably occupied the site around the old church. The earliest reference comes in the *Life of Colmcille* (c. 700AD), when Magheross was described as being in the territory of Mugdorna who occupied much of the land between Castleblayney and Carrickmacross. Later, the church was associated with the people called Fir Rois, whose territory covered much of south Monaghan. There are references to two priors of the Fir Rois who are likely to have been resident at Cell Rois/Magheross; a Maenach (ca. 825) and Maelpadraig (ca. 845). Later still, the church lay within the territory of the O'Carroll and MacMahon kingdoms. The first written reference to Magheross comes in c.1541 – *ecclesia parochialis Sancti Finini de Ros, alias Machair Royes*, that is Magheross in the Diocese of Clogher.

Grace Moloney (unpublished) records the following:

For a period in the 12th century, the see for the area was the Abbey of Louth (Flanagan 1980, 225). After the dissolution of religious houses in the Reformation period, the tithes for the parish of Magheross were held by the Abbey of Louth and the hospital of St John in Ardee. Later, James I granted ownership of the Magheross church lands to the Bishop of Clogher, and it was sold it under the Church Temporalities Act to the Porter family (Shirley 1879, 534), bringing it into private hands.

The earliest reference to the church itself comes in c.1622 (by which time it was in ruins), although a church structure is said to be depicted in a map of the estates of the Earl of Essex in the Barony of Ferney in 1575.

The churchyard contains graves of both Protestant and Catholics, and at least two Roman Catholic bishops. Graveslabs, upright gravestones, un-inscribed upright gravestones, box-tombs and table-tombs, and at least two underground crypts, were all used as memorials in the churchyard. The earliest dated stone bears the date 1664, and the most recent burial is said to have taken place in 1955. The carved upright gravestones are primarily those of Protestant 'English' families, while native 'Irish' Catholics used plain crosses or slabs. Several memorials to the MacMahon family display their coat-of-arms.

According to a stone plaque inside the tower, the church was ruined again in the rebellion of 1641 and was rebuilt in 1682 by Roger Boyle, Bishop of Clogher, amongst others. The church may have been ruined again during the early 18th century and was rebuilt yet again in c.1779. In 1868 the congregation moved to the newly built church of St Patrick of Ardagh, and Magheross fell into disuse.

The church is rectangular in plan, with a square tower set against the west gable. The church measures approximately 21m by 9m (externally) and the tower about 3m by 3.5m externally. The carved stone surrounds to the west-door and tower may date to the 1682 rebuild. The church walls still stand to between 1m to 3m in height, with the east gable largely complete (although its window lacks all original tracery). The stone tower also stands complete, and is individualized by its stylised cap and parapets.

The site and grounds are in reasonable state of repair, and regular grounds maintenance appears to be undertaken. The site is not at present open to the public, because of previous problems with anti-social behaviour. Perhaps as a consequence, it is free from litter and modern graffiti.

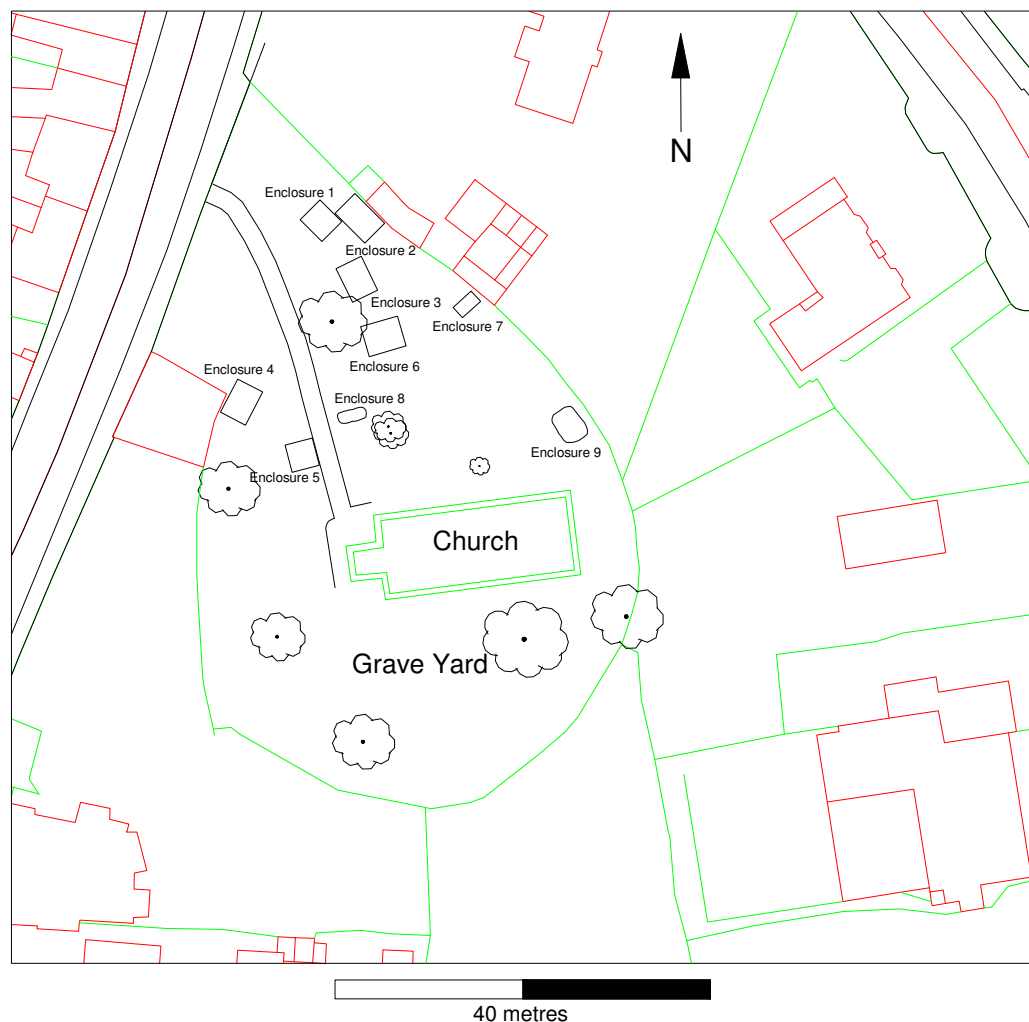


Fig. 2 Plan of Magheross church and graveyard, showing main structures and trees. Sketch

plan only.

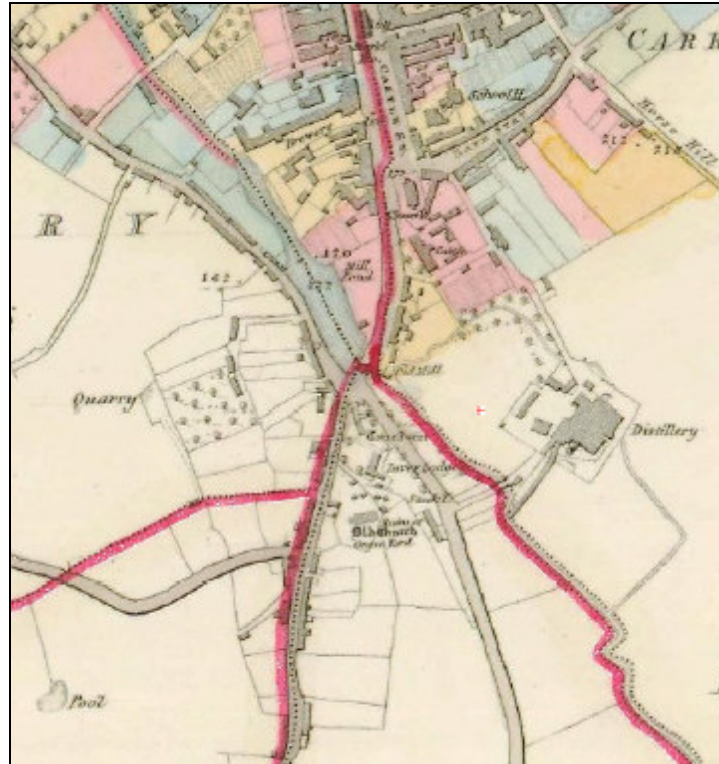


Fig. 3 Historic Map 1 (OSI 6" 1829-41)

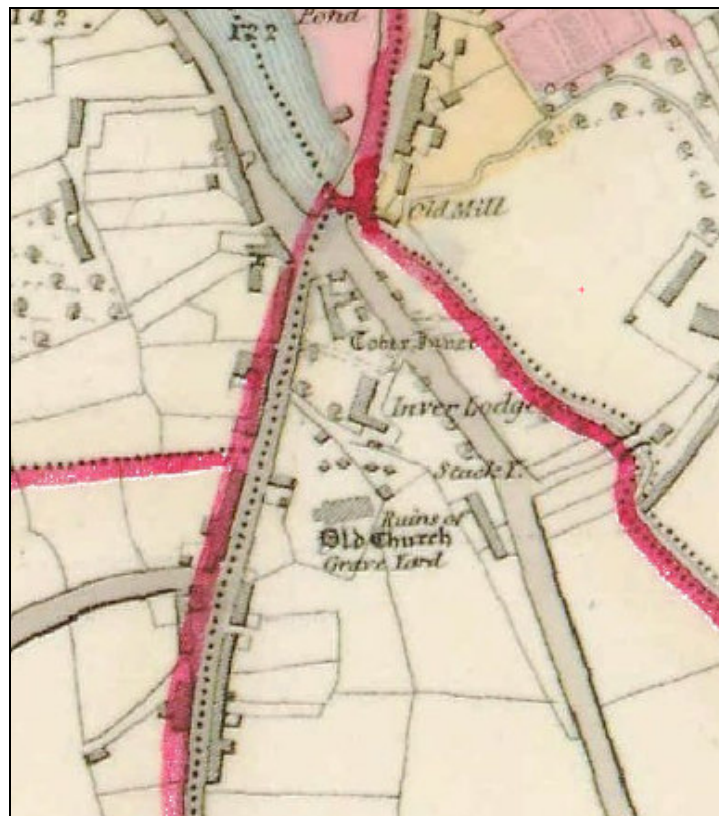


Fig. 4 Historic Map 1 (OSI 6" 1829-41 [detail])

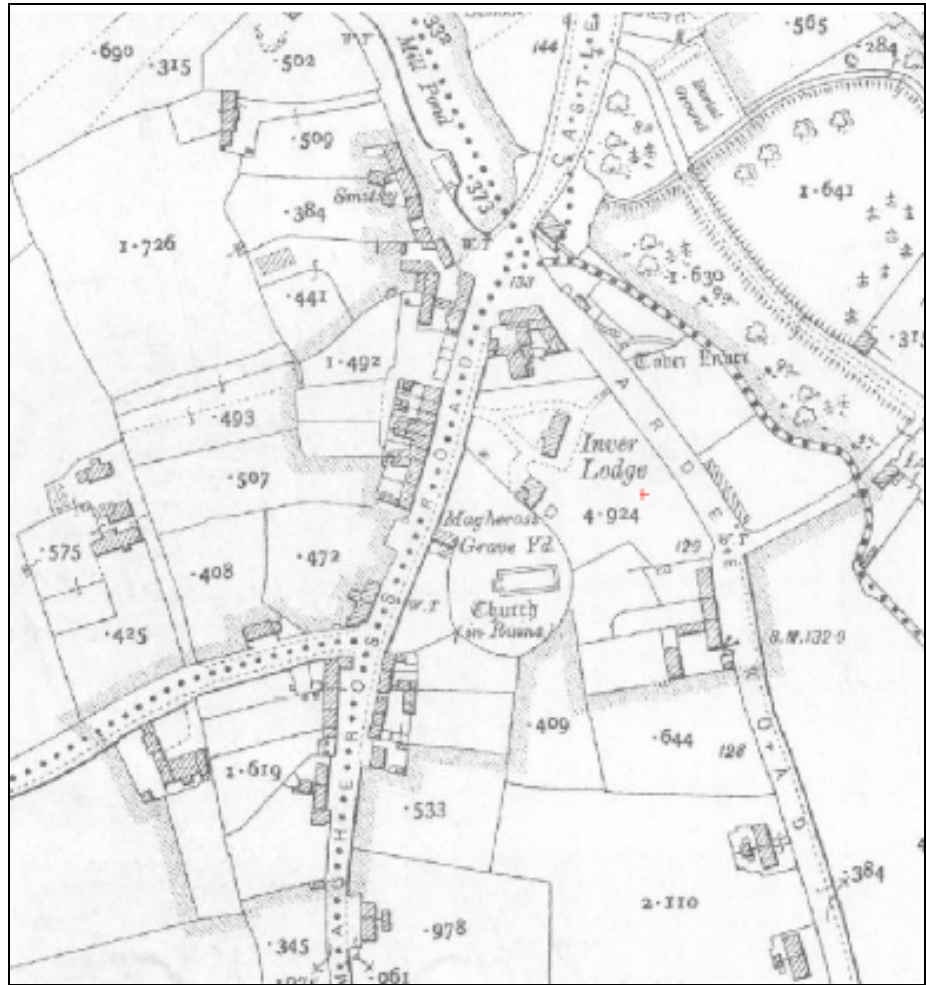


Fig. 5 Historic Map 2 (OSI 25" 1897-1913)

Current use and condition

Redundant church and graveyard

Legal framework and restrictions

The church and graveyard are both Recorded Monuments protected under the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. The Church is also a Protected Structure (RPS 41300334) accorded 'National Importance'. One of the Irish Yew's in the churchyard is listed in Monaghan County Council's Conservation of Trees and Woodlands list.

It is important to note that when the owner or occupier of a property, or any other person, proposes to carry out, or to cause, or to permit the carrying out of any work at or in relation to a Recorded Monument, they are required to give notice in writing to the Minister two months before commencing that work. The National Monuments Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is required to advise on whether the works can be carried out, and if so, how.

3. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The value of historic graveyards

Historic graveyards are intrinsically of value, and Magheross displays many aspects which contribute to, and illustrate this importance:

- The history of a church and its graveyard is of value to archaeologists and others interested in the development, through time, of religious beliefs and changing attitudes to death, burial and remembrance. The authenticity of the monuments, the setting of the stones and the original location are therefore important.
- Inscriptions on gravestones provide precisely dated evidence of stone decay and deterioration.
- Gravestones are often the only documents of the lives of ordinary people; they reflect the community around each [churchyard] in different ways and in different times.
- Gravestones of notable people can often lead to strong associational value with a place.
- The gravestones and their inscriptions can offer fascinating insights into changing attitudes to death, burial and remembrance over recent centuries.
- The design and style of gravestones are of interest to art historians.
- Historic graveyards can sometimes be of environmental value as a refuge to wildlife.

(taken from Historic Scotland's *Conservation of Historic Graveyards* 2001)

Significance of Magheross

In addition to this intrinsic significance (reflected in its inclusion on the RPS), the place is also clearly of great local importance to the community it once, and still continues to, serve. This is reflected in the enthusiasm of the local community and their local council for a Conservation Management Plan to more effectively manage and promote the site. The possibly early origins of the church would place it in the category of national importance, as indicated in Appendix CK1 of Monaghan County Council's Development Plan 2007-2013.

Archaeological and Historical Elements

The significance of the component parts of the site may be expressed as follows:

Gravestones – The group of highly figurative gravestones of the MacMahon family are, perhaps, intrinsically the most important component part of the assemblage because of their dating and the extensive range of diverse and well-executed figurative carvings that they incorporate.

The general mass of gravestones of 18th-century date exhibit a wide variety of carved motifs and are arguably complement the MacMahon group.

Burial Enclosures and railings – the enclosures provide an interesting and

alternative 'history' to the site.

Ruined Church – it is uncertain whether the ruins of the church contain any significant medieval fabric, or are comprised entirely from fabric dating from the 17th- and 18th-century rebuilds. In either case the remains are important, although if medieval fabric can be identified this importance would be enhanced.

Enclosing Wall and original burial ground - the existing enclosure walls are not intrinsically important, although they have a symbolic significance.

Ecology – no unusual or particularly important species were noted during the site visit, but it should be remembered that graveyards generally, and particularly the less well-maintained areas of them, can provide a valuable habitat that should not be needlessly damaged by over-zealous maintenance (**Fig. 6**). There is a yew tree along the south-eastern boundary that should be removed as it now presents a hazard.

In conclusion Magheross is:

- A sacred place of great antiquity and a centre for worship and burial from perhaps as early as the 9th or 10th centuries AD;
- A site of great historical and archaeological significance, exemplified by its collection of gravestones and church ruins. These elements are of importance for future historic and archaeological research;
- A site (including the nearby holy well) of continued religious/devotional use.

Associations

Prominent individuals buried in Magheross include Hugo O'Reilly (Roman Catholic Bishop of Clogher who died in 1801) and Edward Kiernan (Roman Catholic Bishop of Clogher who died in 1844). Local tradition suggests that perhaps as many as three more Bishops were interred there.

Moloney (unpublished) notes that 'glimpses of post-Plantation settlement' are to be found in memorials to John Daniell (died 1681), originally of Dalesbery in Cheshire, and Frances Shalcross (died 1710), daughter of John Shalcross of Derbyshire.

4. ASSESSMENT OF VULNERABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints and Vulnerabilities Any works which take place within the site are governed by the requirements of the National Monuments Act 1930-2004. This is a necessary constraint, and one which delimits the type and nature of any work planned for the site.

Any enhancement of the visitor experience will ultimately require funding, and the sourcing of such funds is a key constraint to any works planned.

The historic fabric which comprises the church and graveyard will require an ongoing maintenance regime, as with any historic structure. In this sense the site can be seen as potentially vulnerable should the funds and management to conduct this future work become unavailable.

The site is considered to be moderately unsuited to attempts for compliance with disability access requirements (principally because of the flight of steps through which access to the site is gained), and any proposals to improve such accessibility should be reviewed against potentially adverse changes to the character of the site.

Opportunities Future efforts to raise the profile of Magheross church to visitors chime with the aspirations of Monaghan County Council. Monaghan Tourism, through its Interreg IIIA programme, has adopted a number of measures which broadly recognise the heritage opportunities of the church and its graveyard. The Interreg IIIA programme includes in its aims, under 'Priority 1 Measure 4 Rural Initiative'

- Improving access to historic sites
- Enhancement of walking and recreational amenities
- Heritage tourism project comprising signage programme at key historic sites and associated heritage marketing programme.

The *County Monaghan - Audit of Tourism Development Opportunities - 2007-2013* identifies a requirement for further targeted investment in;

Heritage, Environmental and Rural Culture Attractions: providing opportunities to invest in existing and new opportunities to showcase the County's heritage, environmental and rural culture assets and improving access to sites of historic significance. Under this requirement the audit specifically identifies Magheross Church and Graveyard;

The plan is to undertake the following:

- Restoration work to the building
- Improvement to the grounds (pathways *etc*)
- Develop index of graves
- Provide interpretative panels

Chapter 4 of the *County Monaghan - Audit of Tourism Development Opportunities -*

2007-2013 identifies potential sources of funding for the proposals put forward in the report.

County Monaghan's Heritage Plan (2006-2010) seeks to address heritage issues in a strategic and co-ordinated way. Amongst its many actions which could be applied to Magheross, the following are particularly relevant;

- 1.4 Identify vacant or unused heritage buildings and develop strategy for their conservation;
- 1.22 Organise a community graveyard recording scheme, to include details of monument types, inscriptions, symbols *etc*;
- 2.11 Promote the understanding of archaeological monuments and sites among landowners and the general public;
- 2.15 Work with FÁS and others to ensure that traditional conservation building skills are available in the county;
- 3.2 Examine possibilities for improving access for all to heritage sites;
- 3.3 Develop a network of themed heritage trails in the county, along disused railway line/canal/quiet roads and in towns and villages;
- 3.10 Undertake eight high profile conservation projects with local communities;
- 4.9 Develop a programme for schools to increase awareness and record diversity in the cultural traditions and history of the county;
- 6.6 Integrate peace and reconciliation considerations into heritage projects.

The local political climate is therefore a positive one in which to further develop the opportunities Magheross offers. Detailed discussion of these opportunities and recommendations are provided below, but may be summarised as a programme of phased works to ensure continued access to, conservation of, and interpretation and promotion of the site.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Conservation Principles

The basic philosophical principle of this strategy is that the church and graveyard should continue to benefit from a long-term conservation programme, and it may be appropriate to consider a Quinquennial Review system to ensure that the momentum of such a programme is sustained. (A Quinquennial Review system is a formalised regular review of the many issues which may affect an historic property, including structural issues, maintenance, effects of various on-going activities and uses with the express intention of identifying necessary capital or repair works in good time, thus minimising costs and ensuring the long-term survival of the site or building (*c.f.* Appendix 1).

The programme should allow the church and graveyard to be managed in such a way as to maximise its spiritual, socio-cultural and leisure possibilities, and to provide enjoyment for individuals through an increased appreciation and understanding of the site. It should also be very firmly based upon ensuring that the site's character and fabric are preserved.

The management of the site should be undertaken in partnership with the range of stakeholder organisations consulted during the preparation of this strategy (and listed above).

General conservation 'best-practice' principles include:

- The preservation of the character of buildings and the site in general;
- The use of local materials (and re-use of fallen materials) wherever possible;
- The use of lime mortars and local vernacular materials for any new building works;
- That the repair and/or consolidation works should not jeopardize the future integrity of the buildings.

All conservation and management works should be based upon a detailed record derived from survey and, if necessary, intrusive investigations. This should provide a record of 'as found', and form the basis for informed conservation (*c.f.* Maxwell, Nanda & Urquhart 2001, *Conservation of Historic Graveyards*, and Clarke 2001 *Informed Conservation*). In practice, the majority of the fabric requires conservation-based repair and consolidation rather than extensive rebuilding.

Buried archaeological deposits are certain to survive within the site and should not be needlessly disturbed – and where an impact appears unavoidable a plan for mitigation by record and excavation should be developed in consultation with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). An Archaeological Impact Assessment should be formulated, and consistently updated within the design process to ensure that recording and investigations are included within both design and development works.

The character of the site must not be adversely affected by any works – and with thoughtful planning, works to improve or restore the character may be welcomed by the National Monuments Section of the DoEHLG.

The history of the site should be presented to site users/visitors in order to place the church and gravestones into their historical context.

Conservation works should in the first instance safeguard the structural integrity of historic fabric on the site and restore weatherproofing. Thereafter, conservation should be directed in a priority order based upon a combination of significance and vulnerability.

For the sake of clarity the following definitions have been used in this strategy:

Maintenance means the continuous protective care of the cultural value of a place. It may relate to the maintenance of oral and/or customary tradition associated with a place or to the fabric, contents and setting of a place.

Preservation means maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding or slowing deterioration.

Restoration means returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.

Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of material (old or new) into the fabric.

Renewal means any action which renews, or revitalises, the cultural significance of the place. Sometimes these actions may affect the fabric or the physical aspects of the place.

Redevelopment means a combination of these five concepts applied appropriately to diverse aspects of a site so as to protect what is most significant without limiting the ability of future generations to use and enjoy the place as well.

Observations and Recommendations

The site (general)

The graveyard is currently maintained by Carrickmacross Town Council. The present regime appears to be generally benign, and our general observations and recommendations are limited to the following;

Action 1

It appears that whilst general care is being taken whilst cutting the grass which covers the site, this exercise is being conducted using lawnmowers. This practice is to be discouraged because of the possibilities of inadvertent damage to grave markers. The use of trimmers is recommended, with the grave markers being properly protected during this exercise.

Action 2

The site should remain grassed, and the level to which the grass is being cut, *ie* not closely trimmed, appears appropriate. Cuttings should be removed from the site.

Action: monitor

There are many stones that present a trip-hazard. However, until a survey has been completed (see below) it is unknown whether these represent burials or are loose building materials. Where such stones would appear to be unconnected to a burial, are loose and are unmarked, they could be removed, thus diminishing the number of trip hazards.

Action: monitor

Vigilance should be maintained to ensure that invasive plants do not become established. The use of herbicides, pesticides and other chemicals should continue to be limited.

- Action: monitor The site does not appear to be subject to vandalism or theft, although this is possibly because the gates remain locked. Once the site is opened to the public, however, it is possible that these problems will appear, and it may be that a regime of limited access with sporadic monitoring from Carrickmacross Town Council employees will be required.
- Action 3 The general setting of the church is marred by a profusion of overhead telephone wires (Fig. 7). If possible, the opportunity to replace these with underground cabling should be taken.
- Action 4 There are no benches or seating within the churchyard. Magheross is semi-urban in character and benches would be typical for this context. Consideration should therefore be given to installing one or two simple benches of sympathetic design, perhaps near the entrance and to the south of the base of the tower to catch the sun.

Surveying and recording

- Action 5 It is not known whether a drawn survey of the fabric has been conducted. If this has not been undertaken it is recommended that a measured survey is undertaken of the church, the enclosures and the memorial stones. This should be conducted by an archaeologist who is familiar with the standards and techniques of such an exercise. The purpose of the survey is to provide a permanent, archival set of drawings which record the church and graveyard fabric prior to conservation works, and will also act as a guide to those works.

Church walls and the tower

The tower and west gable

- Action 6 The survey of the church ruins (Action 5) should be accompanied by a draft structural condition assessment, to be undertaken by a conservation engineer.
- Action 7 Notwithstanding what appears to be a slight lean towards the north, the tower appears to be in generally good order. However, it would benefit from a high-level survey to check the integrity of its conical cap (Fig.8). The previous report on Magheross (Moore undated) noted that the top of the tower was in a poor state of preservation, and its present condition suggests that works may therefore have taken place to it in the intervening years.
- Action 8 Although in a generally good state of preservation, some work is required to the tower to make it a safe place for visitors to walk through and into the nave. A chain (possibly to originally hold a bell) needs removing, and a timber (possibly an original cross brace) appears unsafe and needs remediation work (Fig. 9).
- Action 9 Pigeons are a problem in the tower. It will be difficult to eradicate this problem without closing up all doors and windows, and a more cost-effective solution is to apply pigeon-deterrent strips on the window ledges and cross-braces (once they have been replaced).
- Action 10 The east door from the tower into the nave has been the subject of remediation works in the past (Fig. 10). Whilst this may have stabilised previously unstable masonry, the bricks are not in keeping with the historic fabric, and this type of repair is not recommended for any future works.

The conical cap of the tower must be weather-proofed and adequate rainwater

Action 11 drainage from the tower provided. The high-level structural survey should check that these requirements are in place.

Action 12 The conical cap is being slowly covered with ivy (Fig. 8). This needs removal. However, this should only begin when funds and a timetable are in place to conserve the fabric that will be exposed. Once these are in place the roots should be cut at the root and the plant allowed to die back (this process can be accelerated using suitable herbicides). Once dead, the ivy should be removed from the top downwards, and the fabric exposed conserved at the same time.

Action 13 Conservation should concentrate on sensitive and agreed re-pointing with a lime-based mortar, thus stabilising any loose masonry. This work will necessarily require scaffolding, which will provide the opportunity for a detailed inspection of the remainder of the tower's fabric.

Action 14 Generally, the inside of the tower needs tidying, particularly to remove the waste generated by pigeons. However, care should be taken to protect some of the graffiti (Fig. 11) which is now in itself historically significant.

South wall

The south wall is in need of remedial works, some urgent. These comprise;

Action 15 Removal of the ivy which covers the west part of the southern wall and is slowly covering the tower (Fig. 12). This should be removed under the same controlled conditions as detailed in Action 12.

Action 16 Conservation work to the wall-tops and general elevations (Fig. 13), to comprise localised replacement of missing stones, securing of others that are currently loose and deep sunken repointing with a lime-based mortar. It should be noted that the aim here is not to effect a return to an original design, but merely to provide consolidation of what remains.

Action 17 The window in the eastern end of the south wall (Figs 14 and 15) needs some urgent remediation work to stabilise large cracks in its jambs, and a potentially unsafe arch. The cracks should be stabilised by inserting three or more pins at 600mm centres, and repointing. The arch should have any gaps refilled with stone (preferably stone lying around the base of the wall) and repointed in a lime-based mortar. Once this is complete the top of the arch should be capped with mortar to prevent further weather incursion.

Action 18 A tree is growing in the nave adjacent to the south wall (Fig. 16). This should be carefully removed by a tree surgeon because its roots will eventually damage the wall and underlying archaeological deposits.

East gable

Action 19 The window in the eastern gable has at sometime in the past been repaired using cementations mortar (Fig. 17) which is now beginning to delaminate from the window opening. This action should be monitored and, when appropriate, it should be removed and the window surround repointed using lime mortar. This should be done sensitively, with the aim of consolidation rather than restoration. The wall-top requires weather-proofing with lime mortar (Fig. 18).

Action 20 The external south-east corner of the church (Fig. 18) needs consolidation using the methods outlined above.

North wall

Action 21 The wall-top requires weather-proofing with lime mortar, and there are a few areas which require repointing. Generally, however, little work is required other

than removal of ivy in the manner outlined above (Figs 19 and 20).

Interior

The nave space is currently set to gravel and small stones, with several upright headstones and a larger number of horizontal grave-slabs (Fig. 16). Whilst this does not make an ideal surface on which to walk it is a relatively appropriate surfacing treatment. If the desire is to resurface the nave, the temptation to use graveslabs from the site should be avoided, since this will promote wear to the inscriptions. Various flooring materials might be appropriate, if it is within the vernacular, although care must be taken to ensure that no damage is caused to underlying archaeological deposits.

Trees

Action 22 Mature trees enhance the appearance of graveyards and provide a habitat for wildlife (Fig. 21). As with most graveyards, Magheross contains a number of yews, one of which is listed in Monaghan County Council's Draft Development Plan 2007-2013. However, tree and shrub roots are potentially damaging to any masonry, particularly where trees are growing close to the masonry fabric. A regime of regular pruning should be maintained, and over-mature trees replaced as necessary (after consultation with Monaghan County Council's Heritage Officer).

Action 23 Falling branches and trees are a hazard to the public and monuments alike. Furthermore, the trees along the north-eastern boundary wall are likely to eventually undermine and destabilise the boundary wall. A yew tree against the south-eastern boundary (Fig. 22), where the enclosure wall is also a substantial retaining wall, shows signs of distress and is a serious potential hazard. Its removal requires urgent consideration.

Action 24 Work to the collection of trees should include removal of the elder from the around the trunks of the yews. It should be noted, however, that the retention of dead trees is beneficial to natural habitats, and a policy of clearance should be weighed against the potential for encouraging the quality and diversity of wildlife.

Any stumps should not be removed, since this might cause damage to surrounding graves and grave-markers, but should instead be treated to accelerate the rotting process.

Ivy

Action 25 Ivy-covered ruins contribute to the sense of gentle decay which characterises graveyards. They may also be homes to bats or owls. Moreover, injudicious removal of ivy can destabilise a structure and accelerate the rate of collapse. Ultimately, however, retention of ivy will also hasten decay of the fabric.

Removal of the ivy from the church walls should only begin when funds and a timetable are in place to conserve the fabric that will be exposed. Once these are in place the roots should be cut at ground level and the plant allowed to die back (this process can be accelerated using suitable herbicides). Once dead, the ivy should be removed from the top downwards, and the fabric which is exposed conserved at the same time. Conservation should concentrate on sensitive and agreed re-pointing with a lime-based mortar, thus stabilising any loose masonry.

New planting

Thought and consideration is required before any new planting occurs, because not all tree species are suitable for such environments. Moreover, tree roots damage underlying archaeological deposits. There are several tree species which are suitable, most obviously yews, ash, wild cherry and other native species (The custom of planting yews in churchyards seems to have come with Christianity to Ireland, in imitation of Mediterranean cemeteries with cypress and laurel).

Paths

Action 26

Access from the road to the church is via a graveled path which is in keeping with the urban setting of the church (Fig. 23). However, the use of concrete kerbing is at odds with the historic character of the site and should, when it is appropriate, be replaced with stone kerbing or removed altogether. Around the rest of the churchyard there is no need for paths, although if pedestrian traffic increases sufficiently, natural paths will in any case develop, and on routes that have found to be most suitable.

Gravestones

The majority of the gravestones appear to be in good repair and are easily accessible (Fig. 24). Some, however, have sustained damage in antiquity, and this is especially true of some of the grave slabs (Figs 25 and 26). Whilst this damage is unfortunate, repairs would be expensive and they are consequently thought to be unnecessary at this time.

Despite the temptation there appears to be no need to right any of the fallen grave-markers. The effects of time and weathering are a key characteristic of graveyards, and suit their character of gentle decay. Gravestones should not be raised or straightened, unless by doing so their structural integrity can be stabilised, and they should not be cleaned since this will promote deterioration of the inscriptions.

Action: monitor or seek advice

Moss and lichen also add to the character of graveyards (Fig. 27). Some lichens damage stonework, and it might be beneficial to consult a lichenologist to ascertain whether the lichens are benign or not. Mosses are generally sympathetic to gravestones and should only be removed if there is clear evidence that the growths are having a detrimental effect on the integrity of the stone.

Action: monitor

Any conservation measures which are required to make markers safe must be designed to slow down the rates of deterioration, and not to effect a restoration. The most effective policy is to take steps to ensure that no further damage is caused by visitors, falling trees or masonry.

Action 27

The inscriptions on all grave markers will eventually through time become illegible. In a small number of cases it is sometimes advisable to remove markers from the effects of weathering or from the possibility of theft (Fig. 28).

In the case of Magheross all the grave-markers should be recorded in detail (perhaps through a community-based project). This record will eventually form the only means by which markers may be read. Steps should therefore be taken to ensuring that this record is complete and permanently archived in accessible forms, and that it is made freely available to stakeholding organisations.

Action: for

Additionally, it might be thought appropriate to investigate the use of laser

consideration scanning techniques to record the gravestones, since this method would result in digital data which could be readily used to fabricate replica gravestones in the future.

Action: monitor Although the site, when it was fully accessible to the public, suffered from anti-social behaviour the risk of theft does not appear at this time to be a problem at this site. However, steps should be taken to monitor the safe-keeping of the grave markers and other monuments, perhaps by raising awareness with the local Garda Síochána and the community.

Action 28 Any decorated stones which have become broken or detached, should be removed for safe keeping to a secure council premises, although a policy of removing artefacts to remote locations is generally not to be encouraged because of the chances of loss.

Enclosures

The graveyard houses at least nine enclosures.

Enclosure railings

The ironwork to the various family enclosures is an important part of their character. Unfortunately it is in the main in poor condition. and in need of remedial work (Fig. 29), or is missing entirely (Fig. 30).

Action 29 The condition of the railings and gate is problematic. They would need to be dismantled to effect proper repairs to their support walls, but also need substantial renovation work in their own right. It is important to note that sections which appear to be missing may be lie hidden in undergrowth. If not, it will be expensive to replace the missing sections, which are generally in cast or wrought iron and often have decorative elements to patterns which foundries may no longer hold. Equally, however, they do much to contribute to the character of the enclosure, and it is not advisable to remove them from the site unless there is a programme in place to return them quickly. (We do not recommend removal from the site of any fabric unless there is a clearly identified return date because of the potential for artefacts to become lost). It may also not be advisable to replace suitably renovated sections unless a complete circuit can be attained, because of structural integrity issues.

The optimum solution is therefore to renovate and conserve the railings, and to replace their missing sections with newly-cast or fabricated sections to the original patterns, before restoring them to their original positions.

However, since replacement would be a costly exercise it may have to be deferred. What is necessary at this time is some urgent remedial conservation work, as follows;

- Wire brush off flaking paint and surface rust and treat with proprietary rust-killer.
- Paint with a micaceous iron-oxide build coat
- Finish with two coats of black gloss.

It is unlikely that the railings were treated to decorative paintwork when they were installed, and the temptation to do so now should be resisted.

Action: monitor Over time, the base of the uprights, which are in a much corroded condition, will rot out, and at this time the railings will need to be removed and renovated.

Enclosure 1

Action 30 This simple enclosure (Fig. 31) comprises a monument (in good repair) surrounded by a dwarf wall. Modern poles act as simple railings. These are in disrepair and could be removed from the site as they contribute little to the original design intent. One of the corner posts has been displaced by a tree trunk which has now been reduced to ground level (Fig. 32; this is one of two trees that have caused damage to the monument). The corner post should be replaced once the tree stump has been removed, although care is required if this is to be done sympathetically. Minor conservation repairs to the dwarf walls are also required.

Enclosure 2

Action 31 This enclosure (Fig. 33) is set against the eastern wall of the churchyard. It comprises a dwarf wall built of freestone which supports a set of railings. The interior needs the undergrowth clearing, and a small tree which is set against the southern wall needs removing. The railings are mostly complete but are in need of painting. Otherwise, no conservation work is required.

Enclosure 3

Action 32 This enclosure comprises a dwarf wall (in some areas rendered) topped by iron railings and containing three grave markers (Fig. 34). Its iron gate has become separated from the railings and now lies against the dwarf wall. This should be removed for safe-keeping. The remaining railings should be painted and conservation repairs conducted to some areas of the wall where stones have fallen away. As with all other repairs, the replacement stonework should be sourced from within the graveyard if possible, and should be set in a lime-based mortar. Otherwise, little conservation work is required, although the development of undergrowth within the enclosure should be kept in check and consideration should be given to removal of the remaining render, which is in poor condition.

Enclosure 4

Action 33 Enclosure 4 is situated against the corner of the workshop which lies to the west of the site. It is distinguished by its short, curved, corbelled access tunnel, the opening to which has been broken into in the recent past (Figs 35 and 36). This presents a public health and safety hazard and should be blocked off in a sensitive and appropriate manner, perhaps using masonry set in lime mortar.

A crack has developed in the south-eastern corner of the dwarf wall of this enclosure (Fig. 36). This needs stabilising by resin-grouting ties into pre-cut slots, prior to repointing in the manner outlined above.

The interior needs to be cleared of the undergrowth and trees that have been taken hold. This work, as elsewhere, must be conducted sensitively, and any loose stonework or ironwork retained in a safe place (preferably on-site) for swift re-use. The ivy which is covering the dwarf walls should only be killed and removed once a timetable for conservation of the walls is in place.

A significant number of the railing posts are missing, and the remaining ironwork is in a poor condition. However, unless railing posts can be sourced at a reasonable price the only work required at this time is for the ironwork to be cleaned and painted.

Enclosure 5

Action 34

Enclosure 5 (Fig. 37) is generally in a state of good repair, possibly because it is the burial place of a Bishop of Clogher, Edward Kiernan. The need for immediate conservation work is limited to painting of the railings and very minor repairs to the dwarf walls that support them. In the longer term, attention will need to be paid to the gate into the enclosure, and its supporting ironwork, since these are in very poor condition (Fig. 38).

Enclosure 6

Action 35

Enclosure 6 is in a poor state of repair (Figs 39 and 40) which is unfortunate because it is the sole example of its type in the graveyard. The enclosure comprises a mortared stone tomb set in a double pitch and originally surrounded by railings set in a dwarf wall. These railings are now in such a poor state of repair (and, indeed, are missing along several stretches) that consideration should be given to their removal and safe storage elsewhere. The dwarf wall is in a similar state of disrepair, as is the entrance, which is set into the east-facing 'gable'. Conservation work to the dwarf wall and the entrance is an urgent requirement, as is removal of the undergrowth, the roots of which are destabilising the tomb roof.

Enclosure 7

Action 36

This small enclosure is set against the east wall of the churchyard (Fig. 41). Although it is in generally good repair the gate through the railings which encircle it is missing, and the dwarf wall that supports the railings requires minor conservation works. Additionally, the interior, and the area surrounding the enclosure, needs its vegetation clearing. The railings needs cleaning and painting, and if the gate can be found and is in a good state of repair it should be remounted.

Enclosure 8

Action: monitor

This enclosure (Fig. 42) could be more strictly described as a vault, since most of it is submerged. The top of this has in the past been quite heavily mortared with an unsuitable cementitious mortar, and a grass cover is developing over this. Little conservation is required, although the opportunity should be taken when appropriate to renew the cement with a lime-based mortar.

Enclosure 9

Action 37

Enclosure 9 is barely recognisable as such because of the level of heavy ivy and brambles that has covered it (Fig. 43). A number of small trees have also become established. This undergrowth needs clearing, after which time an inspection will be required to assess the form and fabric of the enclosure, and thence any conservation work that is necessary.

Boundary walls

All boundary walls are formed from free-stone bonded in various types of mortar.

South wall

Action 38

Few remedial works are necessary to this wall, which appears to be in generally good condition. However, some localised repointing in a lime-based mortar would be beneficial in areas where gaps have appeared (Fig. 44). Although the top of the wall has been capped with cement which should be left *in situ*, any

new capping should be in a lime-based mortar.

West wall

Action 39

The western wall, part of which is formed by the rear wall of the industrial units set against the street, is generally in adequate repair. However, some localised repointing in a lime-based mortar and recapping would be beneficial in areas where gaps have appeared and deterioration has set in (Fig. 45).

Gate

The gate and its ornate gate-posts in the west wall (Fig. 46) are in a good state of repair. The gate appears to be relatively new and is in an appropriate wrought-iron. No remedial work is required.

North wall

Action 40

The north wall, here taken to be that stretch from the Kingscourt road to Enclosure 7, appears to be in a similarly good state of repair, although it is heavily overgrown with ivy and an inspection after this has been trimmed might prove otherwise. Parts of the wall are a retaining wall to the graveyard, with residential properties situated to the east. For this reason the wall needs to be maintained in a state of good repair.

East wall

Action 41

The eastern wall acts as a retaining wall, and the trees growing along it (Fig. 22) threaten to destabilise the wall (a localized collapse would have quite serious consequences given the height of soil retained). Most of these trees should be removed or reduced in height by an arborist. However, simply removing the trees would then expose visitors to a potentially serious fall to the external ground level. One solution is to encourage a non-invasive hedging – or simply brambles – to form an effective but unobtrusive barrier.

Miscellaneous

Action 42

Worked stone fragments are common finds in graveyards, and the stoup pictured in Fig. 47 is no exception. Unfortunately the portable nature of this object makes it a candidate for theft, and should probably be removed to safer premises or more firmly secured.

Visitor facilities and promotion

It is recognised by the client group that the site needs more effective promotion, and, more importantly, needs to be re-opened to the public. Whilst this is a realistic aim, it must also be recognised that the site is never going to be a major tourist attraction. However, with suitable marketing by the regional tourism body and Town Council, appropriate signage, and a simple brochure made available at regional Tourist Information Offices and visitor attractions on both sides of the border, it will attract a steady stream of specialist visitors, interested in archaeological and historical sites.

There should be a staged approach to promoting the site and improving the visitor experience. This approach is built from a number of questions and answers:

1 Is the site inherently suitable for public access?

The site has historically been a focus for the community, and public access should be resumed. Unfortunately, public access will bring problems as well as

benefits, and it must be recognised by the stakeholding groups that re-opening the site again will require an increase in resources. This increase will have to take into account the need to discourage or police anti-social behaviour, and an increase in regular maintenance as a result of increased wear and tear. Insurance considerations must also be taken into account.

2 Is the site safe for visitors?

The site appears to be generally safe for visitors, although a pedestrian visiting the site from the town centre will encounter a surprisingly large volume of traffic on the Kingscourt road.

Action 43

The masonry appears to be generally stable, but loose masonry on the ground might be cleared to prevent unnecessary trip hazards. Although most masonry is embedded in the ground (Fig. 48) and represents the bases of broken gravestones there are also quantities of loose stonework. The embedded stones should be left in place, but the loose stonework and rubble should be cleared away for re-use in the conservation work to the site's fabric.

Action 44

Some works as detailed above are required to make the tower safe for visitors, and unsafe tree branches need to be removed as part of the ongoing maintenance regime.

The east wall retains a surprising depth of soil, and there is a considerable drop which will prove a hazard to those who climb onto the wall. Consideration should be given by Carrickmacross Town Council to methods of ensuring the safety of visitors at this location. Any solutions must be sympathetic to its surroundings, and for this reason a raising of the height of the wall is probably not to be recommended. A simple solution would be encourage the growth of brambles of hedging against walls which present a danger, although a maintenance regime will be required to ensure that this does not become invasive.

3 Is the site accessible to all members of the community?

There are currently few opportunities to park close to the site, and this will discourage some from visiting. One solution, although expensive, would be to consider the purchase of an adjoining property and establishing a small car-park and new entrance into the site.

The site is not particularly suitable for wheelchair users because of the steps in the entrance.

4 Is the significance and interest of the site explained?

At present there is no information on offer to the visitor. One or more interpretation panels should be prepared, and sited in sympathetic locations such as near to the entrance and adjacent to the tower. Panels should not be attached to the historic masonry, and their design, construction and location need careful consideration.

5 Are the public aware of the site and its interest?

The site should be promoted through a page on the websites of the local authorities for Counties Monaghan and Armagh, and a simple leaflet should be made available at local tourist information centres and other destinations. Currently the merits of visiting the site are not, by virtue of its relative distance from Carrickmacross town centre, apparent to the first-time visitor. Opportunities to link the site with the town's other attractions should be taken, perhaps by

creating a Town Heritage Trail or similar. If not already in place, heritage signposts should be erected to direct visitors from the town to the site.

6 Are the educational possibilities of the site being used?

The site has educational and cross-community development possibilities. These opportunities will only be useful if community leaders are aware of them, and are given help to use them. A teacher's pack should be prepared, and a local authority officer briefed on the possibilities inherent in the understanding of the site's historical, natural and built heritage qualities.

7 Are there sufficient visitor facilities on the site?

Once the site is re-opened to the public litter will become a problem. One or more litter bins should be provided in locations sympathetic to their surroundings. These might include positions beside the gate and any benches that are introduced, such as beside the tower against the south-facing elevation.

8 Does the local community benefit from the site?

Restricted access makes it difficult for the local community to benefit from the site. Gifford understand that the site is a popular one for staged wedding photographs, and school parties use it. Both uses will be enhanced with improved access. One of the consultees during the preparation of this report felt that the church should receive an annual blessing, and this highlights that consideration should be given to fully consulting the local population on their views and wishes.

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Fig. 6 Graveyards, especially those set in urban areas, can be important oases for wildlife



Fig. 7 The road outside the church is deceptively busy, and the setting of the church is marred by overhead telephone cables



Fig. 8 The top of the tower



Fig. 9 Inside the tower, looking upwards



Fig. 10 The east door in the tower



Fig. 11 Some of the graffiti within the tower is historically significant



Fig. 12 Ivy covers the south wall of the church and is climbing the tower



Fig. 13 The south wall of the church



Fig. 14 Detail of the south-east window of the nave, showing the precarious nature of the lintel



Fig. 15 The south-eastern window in the nave, showing the extent of cracking in the wall



Fig. 16 A tree within the nave needs removal before its roots damage surrounding fabric and underlying archaeological deposits



Fig. 17 The underside of the main nave window



Fig. 18 The east gable of the church



Fig. 19 The north wall of the nave needs its ivy removing



Fig. 20 Detail of the north wall of the church



Fig. 21 The graveyard is home to a number of mature trees which contribute to its character



Fig. 22 This yew tree is damaged, and has the potential to destabilise the adjacent wall



Fig. 23 Although a surfaced path is sympathetic to the church's urban setting, the concrete kerbstones are out of keeping



Fig. 24 Most of the grave markers are in good repair



Fig. 25 Some of the grave markers have sustained significant damage



Fig. 26 Table-slabs in the south-eastern corner of the graveyard have sustained damage



Fig. 27 Mosses and lichen can enhance the character of graveyards



Fig. 28 The fine inscriptions on some of the grave markers are susceptible to damage from weathering



Fig. 29 Much of the ironwork encircling the enclosures is in poor condition



Fig. 30 Some of the railings around the enclosures are missing



Fig. 31 Enclosure 1



Fig. 32 Detail of the damaged corner post to Enclosure 1



Fig. 34 Enclosure 3



Fig. 35 Enclosure 4, with its corbelled entrance to the underground vault situated to the left of the picture



Fig. 36 The entrance to the crypt passage. In Enclosure 4



Fig. 37 Enclosure 5, the burial place of Edward Kiernan, the Bishop of Clogher



Fig. 38 The gate into Enclosure 5 is in very poor condition



Fig. 39 Enclosure 6, looking south



Fig. 40 Enclosure 6, looking north-west



Fig. 41 Enclosure 7, looking south-east



Fig. 42 Enclosure 8, looking east



Fig. 43 Enclosure 9, looking south-east



Fig. 44 Detail of the south wall



Fig. 45 Parts of the west wall of the graveyard need recapping with a lime-based mortar



Fig. 46 The entrance gate to the site is in good order



Fig. 47 A stone stoup lies close to the path



Fig. 48 The graveyard is littered with loose and semi-embedded stones