



Site: Lanistown Castle, DU012-004

Townland: Newbridge Demesne,

Address: Donabate, Co. Dublin

Report on Archaeological Monitoring of CMF Conservation  
Works (CMF24-1-DF004) under Ministerial Consent C00141

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Author: Paul Duffy



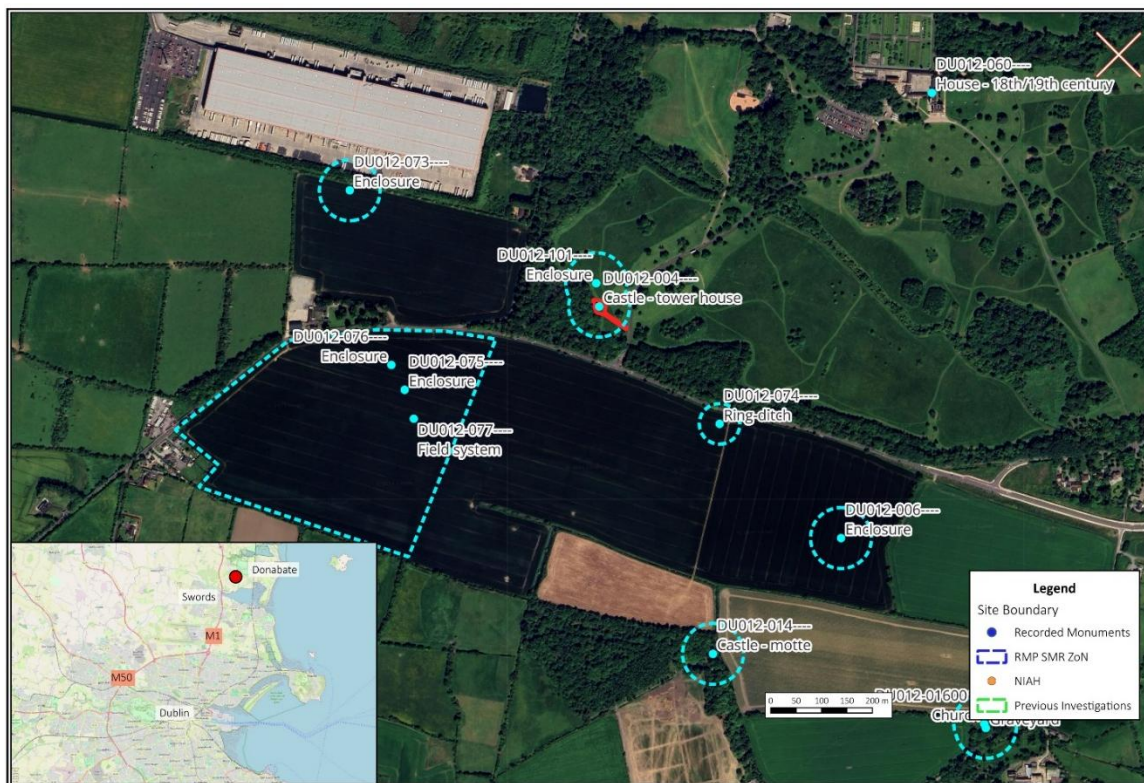


## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report follows on from an application for Ministerial Consent to carry out archaeological monitoring of conservation works at Lanistown Castle, Newbridge Demesne, Donabate, Co. Dublin (Figure 1, ITM 720918, 749661). Ministerial Consent is required as the site is in the ownership of the Local Authority (Fingal County Council), is listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (DU012-004) and it is Protected Structure (RPS No. 493), located in an original, designed 18th demesne landscape. A substantial double ditched enclosure (DU012-101) was identified beside the castle (c. 45m north) in the course of the Fingal Community Geophysical Survey Project in 2018 (Gimson & Garner 2018) indicating that the castle stands within a broader early medieval settlement/ecclesiastical foundation.

Monitoring forms part of the archaeological mitigation measures recommended in the Lanistown Castle, Donabate Conservation Works by Fingal County Council. This project includes masonry conservation works at Lanistown Castle, consisting of a well preserved, medieval tower house, located on open ground and position within the 350-acre Newbridge House Demesne, a publicly-owned heritage amenity in the care of Fingal County Council, which is opened every day and all year around, and houses several public events.

Monitoring of conservation works commenced in September 2024 with works completed by final inspection on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025. All monitoring of works has been carried out by the author.



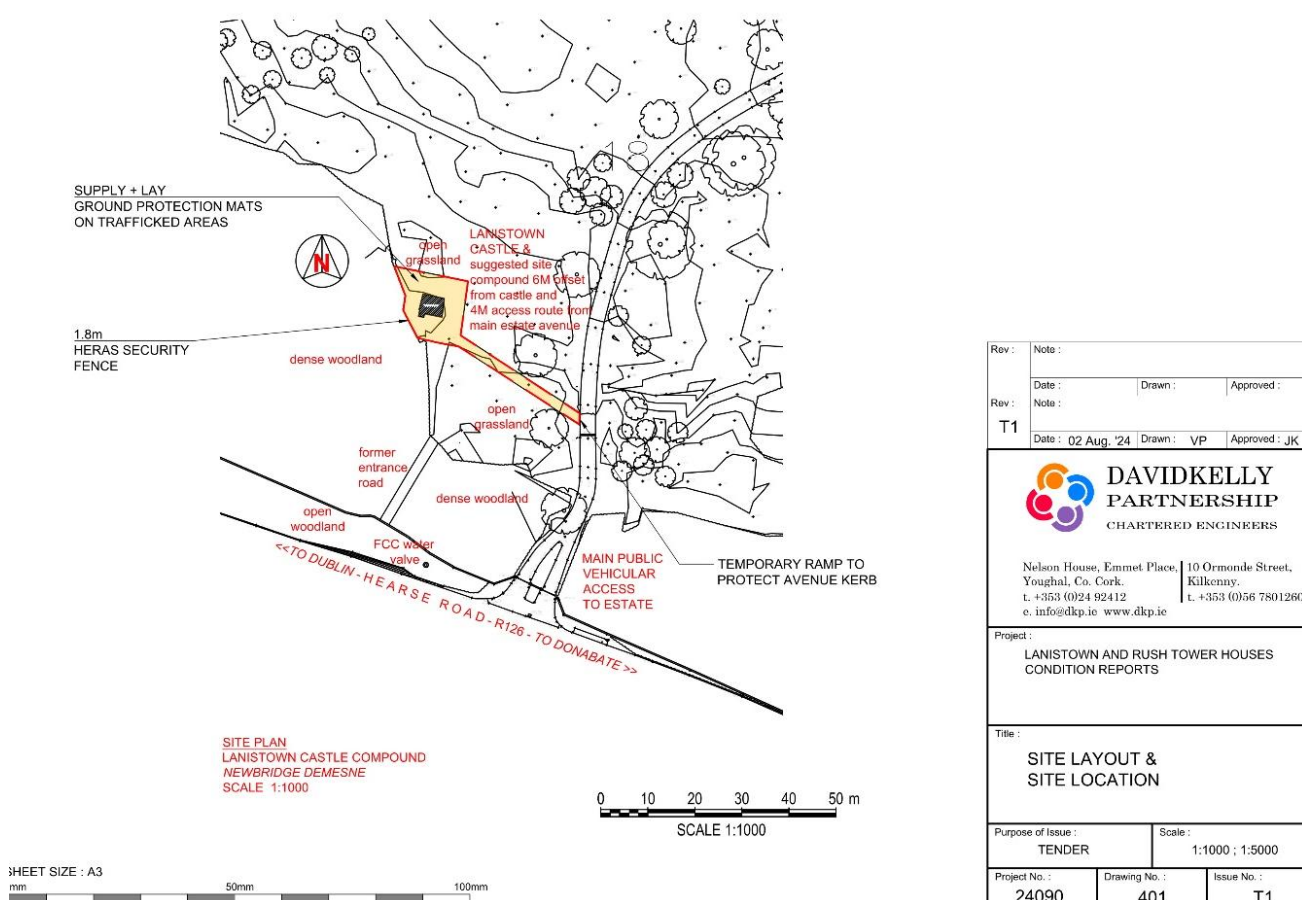
**FIGURE 1:** Site Location showing nearby recorded monuments

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

The conservation works consisted of masonry and mortar repairs to address structural failure, loss of mortar and masonry, water ingress and unwanted vegetation; and to arrest and retard the damage arising from weather exposure generally and the accelerated effect of climate change.

The aim of the works is to retain, and where possible enhance, the significance of the monument by consolidating it as stable ruins. The works are permanent and designed to cause minimal interference to the historic fabric. The works to the monument have adhered to the Conservation Guidelines issued by The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Advice Series 'Ruins – The Conservation and Repair of Masonry Ruins' and 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)'; Historic Scotland and others. and have followed the philosophies of conservation outlined in the International Charters agreed upon in Venice and Burra.

All works have been carried out under the direction of and to the specifications of DKP conservation engineers (see Volume 2A Specification document accompanying this submission). All works are as listed in the Method Statement submitted and agreed in September 2024.





### 3 MONITORING RESULTS



**Plate 1:** Erection of scaffolding prior to conservation works

#### 3.1 EXCAVATION

##### **Buttress**

A shallow excavation was carried out to establish the depth of the foundations beneath the southeast corner masonry wall and to ascertain the reason for the subsidence of this feature (Plates 2 and 3). This hand excavation, carried out by the author, removed the sod layer and topsoil to a depth of 0.25m in a cutting 0.5m wide extending south and east from the face of the wall



(Plate 4). It was found that, while the projecting masonry spur or buttress was of a contemporary build with the rest of the castle, there were no below ground foundations to this projection and this is what had caused the subsidence. Assessment of the feature confirmed that further subsidence is unlikely and that the optimum remedial work was the infilling of the fissured masonry with lime mortar and salvaged stone from the site to stabilise the fragment and prevent further water ingress and erosion (Plates 5 and 6).



**Plate 2:** Subsidence in southeast corner wall, facing south





**Plate 3:** Foundation test pit showing no foundation beneath the projecting masonry spur, facing north



**Plate 4:** Lime mortar repair to projection, facing north

**Plate 5:** Lime mortar repair to projection, facing northwest

## Eastern Arch

A compromised pointed arch on the eastern ground floor level of the castle has been propped sometime in the 20th century arch by a single-leaf concrete wall (Plates 6 and 7). Scraw and loose rubble and sod was also removed by hand by the author at the base of this wall to establish the nature of the foundation (Plate 8). It was found that the wall sits upon a wide concrete plinth that appears to be c. 0.2m in depth. This concrete wall was reenforced and rendered with a lime harling and the compromised arch was stabilised with infilling of stone salvaged from the site bonded with lime mortar (Plate 9).



**Plate 6:** Single-leaf wall supporting compromised arch, facing west



**Plate 7:** Northern side of compromised arch, facing west





**Plate 8:** Base of single-leaf wall



**Plate 9:** Lime mortar harling and repair to arch, facing west

## First Floor Vault

The stone vault covering the ground floor rooms and forming the first floor level in the castle had been open to the elements for a prolonged period of time. During this time a deposit of hummic material had accumulated, providing a fertile environment for plant growth (Plate 10). Significant woody saplings were present at the outset of the project and the conservation works provided for the removal of the plant growth, removal of the hummic material and installation of a layer of compacted puddle clay to be capped by a thin layer of grassed sod that could be easily maintained through regular mowing. The hummic material was removed by hand under archaeological supervision (Plate 11). No artefactual material was encountered apart from a plastic shotgun cartridge and a scalloped edged fragment of tin-glazed earthenware (Plates 12 and 13).

Prior to the installation of the puddle clay, the lintel over the western ope was replaced with timber beams and a hole in the floor over the western intramural stairs was covered with a salvaged stone slab (Plates 14-16).





**Plate 10:** Vegetation growth from soil over vault, facing west



**Plate 11:** Hand removal of soil overlying vault, with replaced western lintel visible, facing west



**Plate 12:** Plastic shotgun casing in soil overlying vault



**Plate 13:** Tin glazed earthenware from soil overlying vault





**Plate 14:** Hole prior to conservation, over intramural stairs



**Plate 15:** Installation of puddle clay art first floor level, facing northeast



**Plate 16:** Grassed sod installed over puddle clay at first floor level



### 3.2 GROUND FLOOR

#### Removal of trample and stone in the interior

The removal of uneven hardened muck mixed with collapsed masonry stone within the vaulted ground floor space of the castle was archaeologically monitored. The hoof pocked muck was observed to be 0.15-0.2m in depth (Plate 17). The scattered, loose stone embedded in this muck was retrieved and examined and several moulded fragments were recovered. Loose stone around the western exterior wall was also examined and several further fragments were recovered (see Section 4.5 below).



**Plate 17:** Ground floor interior showing compromised arch, hoof-pocked muck and loose stone, facing north



**Plate 18:** Ground floor interior following reconstruction of arch and removal of muck and stone



## Remedial work at intramural arch

An intramural arch in the western wall at ground floor level had failed sometime in the building's past and had been partially propped with a concrete pier. The failed section of the arch was reconstructed using stone salvaged from the site and the concrete pier and associated lintel was covered in a lime-based harling to visually blend the structure into the older fabric (Plates 19 and 20).



**Plate 19:** Ground Falsework inserted during reconstruction of ground floor arch, facing west



**Plate 20:** Completed ground floor arch, facing west



During these works, a post-medieval fireplace that had been inserted into the southwestern tower was cleaned out and degraded iron bars and a rotting timber that spanned the concrete sides of this opening, were removed (Plates 21-2). The timber was inspected following removal and was found to exhibit several dowels that may indicate it is of some antiquity. The timber was examined by Dr Ellen Ocarroll and confirmed to be oak. The sample was identified as a very fast-growing specimen with c. 30 tree rings evident. For this reason, it is not feasible for dendrochronological dating.



**Plate 21:** Timber lintel in place



**Plate 22:** Dowelled timber beam from the post-medieval fireplace

### 3.3 WALL WALKS

Significant water pooling, collection of hummic material and vegetation growth was evident on the wall walks at the outset of the project. The vegetation was removed and overlying hummic soil and it was found that loose redbrick dating to the 18th century phases of the site was cluttering the top of the wall walks providing pockets within which vegetation growth was encouraged. These bricks were removed under archaeological supervision, collected and stored in the ground floor room for future use.

The tops of the wall walks were then rough-racked with lime mortar and stone salvaged from the site (Plates 23-5). Lime mortar flaunching was applied to the tops of the crenelations all around the upper levels of the castle (Plates 26-7).

The first-floor wall walks were also stripped of vegetation and rough racked. In addition, the improvised chimney hole relating to the 18th century fireplace in the southwestern tower, was made safe by the installation of a metal grille over its top (Plate 28).





**Plate 23:** Upper levels showing loose redbrick on wall walks



**Plate 24:** Loose brick on western wall walk



**Plate 25:** Western wall walk following removal of brick





**Plate 25:** Flaunching on western wall top



**Plate 26:** Flaunching on eastern wall top



**Plate 27:** Rough racking on wall walks, facing southwest

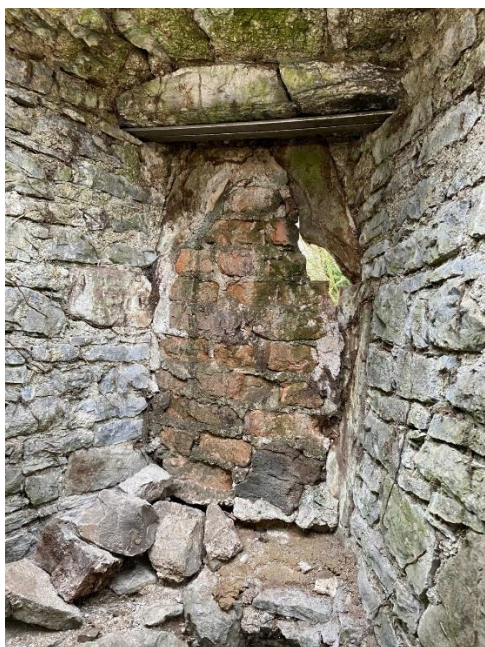




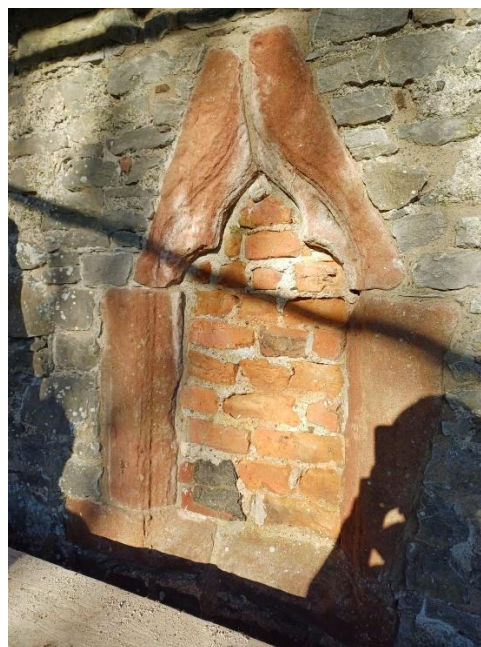
**Plate 28:** Metal grille over improvised 18th century chimney. Facing north

### 3.4 GENERAL REPOINTING AND REPAIR

Areas of failing mortar or missing masonry were repointed and repaired throughout the castle's fabric. A red sandstone ogee headed window at first floor level had been infilled with redbrick at sometime in the past (Plate 29). The lime mortar of this infill was failing and was raked out and repointed.



**Plate 29:** Ogee headed window (interior) prior to repointing



**Plate 30:** Ogee headed window (exterior) after repointing





**Plate 31:** Gap in the masonry at the northeast stairwell, facing west



**Plate 32:** Repaired masonry at the northeast stairwell, facing west



**Plate 33:** Blockwork infill of opes in western gable



**Plate 34:** Lime render over blockwork infill of opes in western gable

A fragment of cream-coloured limestone was retrieved from the rubble during this exercise. It was decorated with a single large roll moulding. The stone resembles Dundry stone, a stone imported from Bristol in the medieval period, however, the moulding is of a later 18th century form. The stone is therefore more likely to be Portland stone (Plate 4).



### 3.5 LOOSE MASONRY FRAGMENTS

During the removal of the uneven muck within the ground floor level and the sorting through the loose stone rubble heaped against the external west and south walls of the castle, a total of xx architectural fragments were retrieved. These fragments can be divided into four distinct types:

1. 4 x Moulded white imported limestone (probably Portland Stone) and including two jambes from a window or door surround of likely 18th century date and two coping stones of the same decorative programme. A close inspection of the stonework surviving at Newbridge House might prove valuable in further identifying these fragments.



**Plate 34:** Moulded limestone fragments

2. 6 x Moulded granite pieces. The moulding on these pieces is of the same type as the fragments above with large rolls similar to Neo-Classical decoration. One of the fragments, a flat fragment is an exact match for the capping stones on the original demesne gates to the south.



**Plate 35:** Moulded granite fragments



3. 15 x Flat granite fragments with edge moulding. These fragments are most likely belonging to decorative cladding or façade on 18th or 19th century date.



**Plate 36:** Fragments of granite cladding

4. 14 x Undressed/broken granite fragments. While these fragments are not architectural, bearing no dressing, moulding or ornament, granite is not local to this area and was brought to the site, probably in the 17th or 18th century.



**Plate 37:** Granite cladding

These masonry fragments are now stored in the ground floor room of the castle along with the salvaged brick.



### 3.6 CERAMIC FRAGMENTS

The works also involved the removal of a deep layer of twigs and debris (largely from birds nesting) from the ground floor level of the southeastern tower. This tower had been converted into a chimney in the 17th or 18th century. A single fragment of ceramic was retrieved from this material – the base of a footed tin-glazed earthenware plate decorated with the motif of the Chinese scholar, a figure common on late 17th century English pottery (Grigsby 2000, 2:140; Plate 11). The shell-edged fragment retrieved from the hummic layed on top of the vault would appear to be from the same vessel (see Plate 13).



**Plate 38:** Base of a footed tin-glazed earthenware plate decorated with the motif of the Chinese scholar

## 4 CONCLUSION

Monitoring of conservation work at Lanistown Castle was undertaken as per the agreed Method Statement submitted with the application for Ministerial Consent C00141. The works are now complete. No further archaeological mitigation is deemed necessary for this phase of the project.

## REFERENCES

- Bates, P. 2001. Donabate and Portrane: a history. Dublin.
- Bennett, I. (ed.) 1987–2010. *Excavations: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Bray. Wordwell.
- Brickley, M. and McKinley, J. (eds) 2004. *Guidelines to the Standards for Recording Human Remains*. IFA Paper No. 7.
- Buckley, L., Murphy, E. and O'Donnabháin, B. 2004. The Treatment of Human Remains: Technical Paper for Archaeologists. Technical paper prepared by IAPA for Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland.
- Campbell, G., Moffett, L. and Straker, V. 2011. A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation (second edition).
- Colfer, B. 2013. Wexford castles: landscape, context, settlement. Cork University Press, Cork.



- Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. 1999. *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*. Dublin. Government Publications Office.
- Gimson, H, and Garner 2018, *Fingal Community Geophysical Survey Project* unpublished report prepared by Earthsound Ltd on behalf of Fingal County Council
- Grigsby, L.B. 2000 *The Longridge Collection of English Slipware and Delftware*, 2 vols. Jonathan Horne Publications, London, 2:140, d105.
- McClatchie, M. and O'Carroll, E. 2015. TII Palaeo-environmental Sampling Guidelines, Retrieval, analysis and reporting of plant macro-remains, wood, charcoal, insects and pollen from archaeological excavations (Revision 5). Dublin. TII Publications.
- Mongey, M. 2019 Living It up in Lanestown in *Archaeology Ireland*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 40-44.
- Monk, M. et al. 2007. *Environmental Sampling: Guidelines for Archaeologists*. Guidance document prepared by the Environmental Subcommittee of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland.
- Moylan, T. K. (1960) The Peninsula of Portrane: Part I. *Dublin Historical Record*, 16 (1), 22–33. Dublin: Old Dublin Society. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30102698>
- Murphy, M. & Potterton, M. 2010. The Dublin region in the Middle Ages: settlement, land-use and economy. Four Courts Press, Dublin.
- National Monuments Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. 1999. *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation*. Dublin. Stationery Office.
- National Monuments Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. *Sites and Monuments Record*, County Dublin
- National Museum of Ireland. 2022 *Standards for the care and treatment of archaeological objects from excavations*. Dublin. National Museum of Ireland.
- National Museum of Ireland. 2019. *Human Remains Policy*. Dublin. National Museum of Ireland.
- National Museum of Ireland. *Topographical Files*, County Dublin.
- O'Keeffe, T. 2015 *Medieval Irish buildings, 1100–1600*. Four Courts Press, Dublin.

## CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

- William Petty, *Down Survey map*, 1673
- John Rocque, *Exact survey of the city and suburbs of Dublin*, 1756 (city 1760)
- Charles Frizzel, *Map of the County of the City Dublin*, 1776
- Ordnance Survey maps of County Dublin, 1846, 1911

## ELECTRONIC SOURCES

- [www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970–2023.
- [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) – DoHLGH website listing all SMR/RMP sites.
- [www.heritagemaps.ie](http://www.heritagemaps.ie) – The Heritage Council web-based spatial data viewer which focuses on the built, cultural and natural heritage.
- [www.geohive.ie](http://www.geohive.ie)– Ordnance Survey Ireland National Townland and Historical Map Viewer (including Aerial imagery 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2013)
- [www.googleearth.com](http://www.googleearth.com) – Satellite imagery (2005–2022).
- [www.apple.com/maps/](http://www.apple.com/maps/) - Satellite imagery (2018)
- [www.booksulster.com/library/plnm/placenamesC.php](http://www.booksulster.com/library/plnm/placenamesC.php) - Contains the text from Irish Local Names Explained by P.W Joyce (1870).
- [www.logainm.ie](http://www.logainm.ie) – Placenames Database of Ireland, developed by Fiontar (DCU) and The Placenames Branch (DoTCAGSM).
- <http://homepage.eircom.net/~mickmongey/MedDonabate.html>