

# DOWN?

used as a means to obstruct or delay planning and development right across the country.

## Supreme Court

With a hearing set for later in the year, the ultimate fate of what many (not unreasonably) want designated as the 'Revolutionary Quarter' remains on hold. In the meantime, the banner affixed to the protected structures has been removed and minimal works are being permitted within the four buildings to secure fabric against the weather. The conservation works halted by an occupation of the site in early January have thus been suspended, a move which is not supported by international best practice.

As the memories of the centenary recede into the background, a Supreme Court ruling in 2017 may prove less tolerant of celebratory verisimilitude and will perhaps focus more on the treatment of other protected battlefield sites in the State. The rights of private property, which have a greater currency than environmental legislation, will doubtless become a central issue. NAMA's recent sale of the site cannot be glossed over, however, where the State itself has turned down an opportunity to acquire and protect the site for its citizens.

Germane to this is a lack of understanding of the different categories of monument and the legal status of a property under a preservation order. Indeed, the 'protected structure' status in Part IV of the 2000 Planning and Development Act is more clearly understood than the various designations of caves, monuments and sites protected by the National Monuments Act, legislation which was conceived in the 1920s. More fundamental, however, are the questions that must be asked regarding the future of the entire battlefield site in the context of the retail development—and, indeed, the message to be transmitted to the world from the proposed visitor centre within the core buildings. At the very least, the Department's Supreme Court appeal may expedite the ratification of a consolidated National Monuments Act, in which a proper consideration of what it means to constitute a National Monument can optimistically be undertaken.

## Battles, Bricks and Bridges project wins best community archaeological project at the British Archaeological Awards 2016

**Congratulations to the communities of Killesher and Cleenish in Fermanagh, who have been adjudged the best community archaeology project at this year's British Archaeological Awards.** In 2013 and 2014 both communities came together to rediscover and celebrate some of the area's rich social, historical and cultural heritage. The *Battles, Bricks and Bridges* project was designed to engage with local schools and the wider community by using community knowledge and folk memory to inform its key activities, and, with professional help and support, to capture and disseminate the experience. It succeeded in raising awareness of the rich culture and history of the area by involving people of all ages in a variety of activities, including archaeology, arts and crafts, storytelling, music, history talks and so on.

As a core part of the project, local people worked on a community investigation to identify and uncover the site of the Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits. This significant battle was fought on the banks of the River Arney in 1594 between Gaelic forces and an English army marching from Dublin to relieve the garrison at Enniskillen Castle. The battle was the first engagement of what subsequently became known as the Nine Years War, which culminated in the Flight of the Earls and the Plantation of Ulster. The principal result of the fieldwork was to locate the battle site through systematic metal-detecting across the Arney landscape. This was undertaken over an area previously dismissed by the professionals but which survived in local folklore as the actual fields over which the battle was conducted. The investigations were undertaken in conjunction with QUB's Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork. Further excavation revealed the remains of a nineteenth-century schoolhouse, beside which upstanding cottages in Old Arney Village were also recorded.

Another aspect of the project concentrated on the rich history of brick production in the area. For centuries brick was made in the fields along the River Arney and transported on boats to Enniskillen. Arney brick was again produced by digging and moulding local clay and firing the bricks in traditional clamps, the work being undertaken by young people and volunteers using traditional methods and materials.

In addition, one of the principal local landmarks, Arney Bridge, was conserved with the assistance of the statutory agencies. It is now believed to be the oldest in Ulster, dating from the 1620s, and it carried the main coach road to Dublin until the new road was constructed in the mid-twentieth century.

Before publishing *Passing the time in Ballymenone*, archaeologist and anthropologist Henry Glassie came to live in the area for seven years in the 1970s. His study of local customs, storytelling and anthropology is recognised as a unique cultural and academic contribution to the area—and, indeed, to south Ulster as a whole. In July 2014 he returned to Ballymenone as a guest of the project. The local hall in Arney was filled to capacity to welcome him back, and the audience enjoyed an evening of witty and reflective conversation between Glassie and local storyteller Seamus McCanny. During his visit Glassie best described the importance of the *Battles, Bricks and Bridges* project: 'When people become interested in being carried back in their lives what they find becomes more than memory, because the memory becomes heritage, and once it becomes heritage it becomes precious'.

The project has developed an excellent website (<http://www.battlesbricksandbridges.org/>) featuring quality materials based on the educational and awareness-raising aspects of the project, to ensure that the activities and the learning are captured for future generations.

Right: Local primary schoolchildren excavating at the start of the project (<http://www.battlesbricksandbridges.org>).

