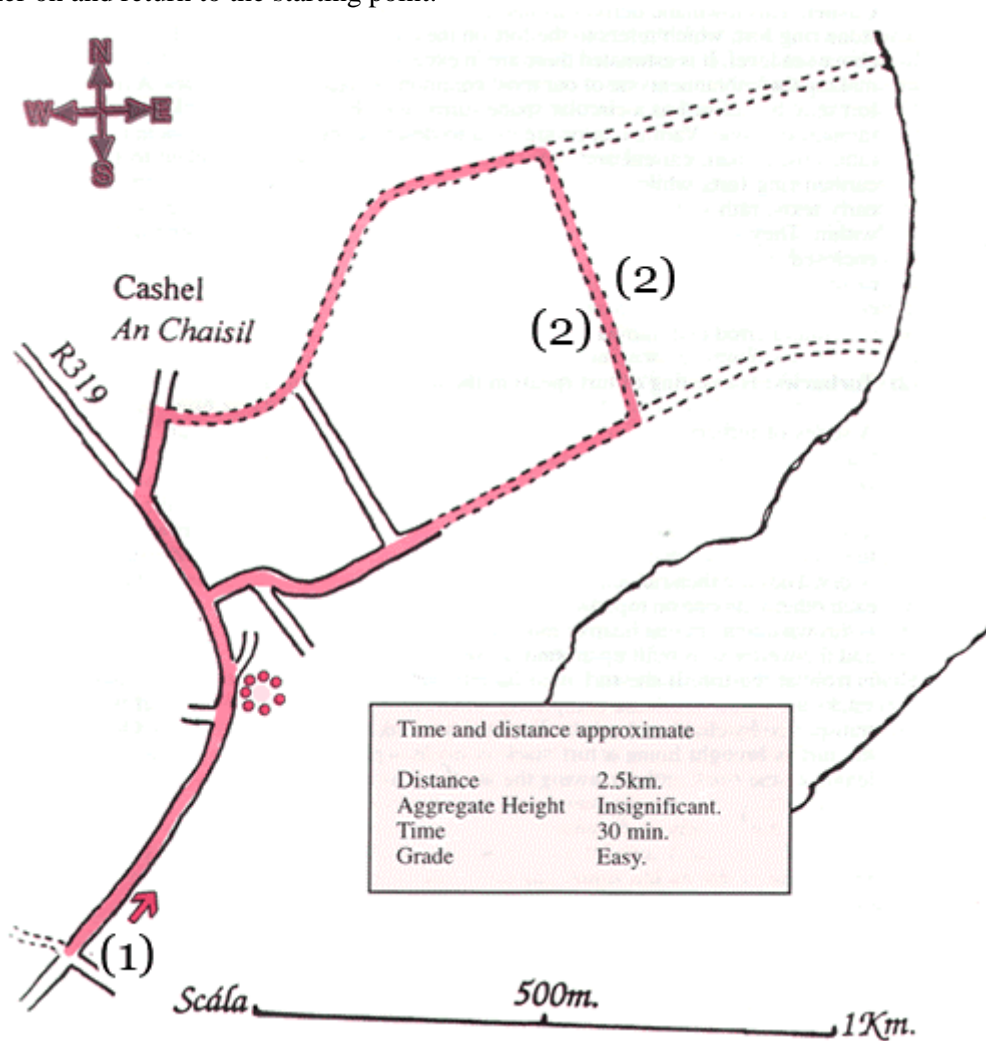


Walk H – The Cashel Loop

The walk starts at the carpark at Ted Lavelles pub (1) in Cashel. Leaving the carpark turn right. Continue on past Achill Outdoor Education Centre and follow the next road immediately on the right. Continue straight on to the end of the village. Here the tarmac road leads to a bog track. It is worth pausing for a few minutes to take in the view. Across the tidal bay to the south-east is Saula Hill (97m) and the townland of Baile Thiar. To the east is the Nephin Beg mountain range and to the south-east is Corraun Hill.

Continue along the track for 250m and turn left on to another bog track which is bordered by turbaries or turf banks. Here turf (peat) is harvested for domestic use (2). Stumps of bog oak are to be seen where the turf has been cut away. Turn left where this track forms a T-junction with another track. This latter track is bordered by clumps of gorse which add a vibrant yellow colour to the landscape when in bloom. The small hill opposite is Cashel Hill (127m) and further west is Minaun Hill with its TV mast. Slievemore lies to the north-west. Continue on to where the track meets a tarmac road and turn left. Turn left at the main road (R319) further on and return to the starting point.



Walk H – The Cashel Loop (page 2)

Points of Interest:

Achill Outdoor Education Centre offers training courses for children and adults in various outdoor pursuits, such as surfing, canoeing, hillwalking, etc.

Cashel: This townland derives its name from the Irish word *Caiseal* meaning a stone ring fort, which refers to the fort on the eastern slope of Cashel Hill 50m above sea level. It is estimated there are in excess of 40,000 ring forts in Ireland, making this monument one of our most common archaeological features. A ring fort may be defined as a circular space surrounded by an earthen bank or by a rampart of stone. Various terms are used to describe this monument, including rath, lios, cathair, caiseal and dún. The terms rath and lios are applied to the earthen ring forts while cathair and caiseal refer to the stone-built variety. In early texts, rath signified the enclosing bank while lios meant the open space within. They vary considerably in size with an average diameter of 30m in the enclosed space. The majority were protected farmsteads, with traces of circular or rectangular house sites within the walls of some. Ring forts were built and occupied over a long period of time – from the Early Iron Age to the Early Christian Period and in Medieval Times.

(2) Turbaries: Harvesting of turf (peat) in the traditional manner.

A series of turbaries or turf banks can be seen in this area, where turf is still harvested in the traditional manner. Initially the bog is scrawed, i.e. the upper crust is cut away with a spade. The bank is then cut vertically into sods with a turf slane (six to eight sods in width). The first and second layer (and the third in some cases) are thrown onto the turf bank and the lower layer is thrown onto the hollow bog or lower part of the bog. After some time the sods are spread out to dry. They are then rickled or put standing – every four sods set upright against each other with one on top. As the rickles dry they are then clamped, i.e. the turf is thrown into a circular heap or mound with the driest sods thrown in the centre and the wetter sods built up around the outer section, until the mound becomes narrow at the top. If the turf is to be left on the bog during the winter small stacks are made which are completely waterproof. In former times the turf was transported by cliabh or back-baskets and by donkey and pannier baskets. Once the turf is brought home a turf stack is made – placing sods side by side the length of the stack and narrowing the structure as it is built upwards.