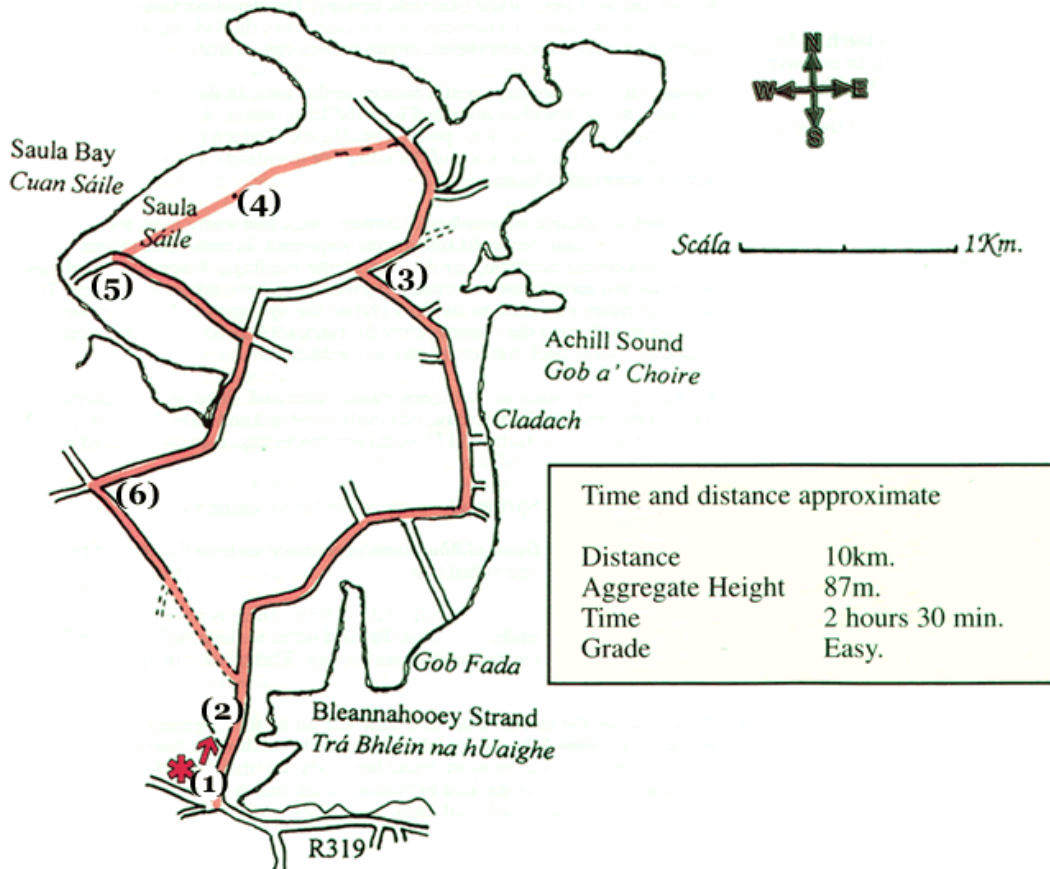


Walk I – The Saula Loop

Start the walk outside the carpark at Achill Cottages holiday homes **(1)**. Turn left, and go straight on in the direction of the headland known as **Saula**. The indented tidal inlet of Achill Sound lies on the right. This road passes through the townlands of Springvale **(2)**, *Gob Fada*, *Cladach* and further on at the T-Junction *Doire a' Bhaile* **(3)**. Turn right here and continue on for approximately 700m.

A gravel cutting in the bog (opposite the third tarmac road on the right) offers access across open ground to Saula hill **(4)** which is 97m above sea level. From here there is a wonderful view of the coastline with the islands of Inishbiggle and Annagh to the north-east towards Ballycroy. Also to be seen are the peaks of Minaun to the west, Slievemore to the north-west, the Nephin Beg mountain range to the east and Corraun Hill to the south-east. From the summit proceed in a south-westerly direction towards *Baile Thiar* **(5)** making your way onto the tarmac road and turn left. There is a lovely view here of the sheltered tidal inlet of Saula. Continue to the crossroads and turn right. At the next crossroads turn left on to an old bog road **(6)**. Continue straight on to where this road emerges near the tidal inlet of Bleannahooey Strand. Turn right here and continue back to the starting point.



Walk I – The Saula Loop (page 2)

Points of Interest:

(1) Glendarrary is derived from the Irish *Gleann Dá Doire* meaning the glen of the two small oak woods. It was once a part of the estate of William Pike, a well-known landlord here in the twentieth century. The wood contains birch, alder, beech, oak and hazel. Unfortunately in recent times rhododendron, an invasive shrub, has taken over, smothering many of the original trees.

Saula: The Irish language is still spoken in this area. In the course of the walk you may notice boulders inscribed with the Irish names of the various villages including *Gob Fada* (the long pointed headland), *Cladach* (the stony shore) and *Doire a'Bhaile* (the oak wood of the village or townland). The many tidal inlets support **seaweed** colonies.

Seaweed, a valuable commodity in former times, had many uses, including as a fertiliser for land. Seaweed rights were important. In some areas these rights were determined according to the size of the holdings. When the townlands were divided an attempt was made to give all villages access to the sea. The seaweed rights extended to the low ebb of the spring tide. Men and women worked at collecting the seaweed from St. Patrick's Day onwards, and carried it inland in wicker back-baskets known as cliabhanna.

Edible seaweeds such as carrageen moss, dulse and sloke are recognised for their nutritive value. Today seaweed is harvested and transported from here to the Arramara Teo factory in Donegal for processing. It is widely used in the manufacture of food-stuffs and cosmetics.

(2) This area known as **Springvale** is renowned for its spring wells.

(3) Looking seaward at *Doire a'Bhaile* you may notice seals on the shore if the tide has ebbed or swimming at full tide.

(4) **Saula Hill** is the smallest of Achill's hills at 97m. There is a well (which is now covered) at the base of the hill. This supplied water to the people of *Baile Thiar* (5) before the group water scheme was set up. There is a village pump at the crossroads.

(6) As you leave the tarmac road and turn left on to the bog road there are the remains of a **lime kiln** on the left. Saula yawls (traditional boats) transported turf to Westport and brought back limestone on their return journey. The limestone was burnt in the kiln to produce lime, which had various uses – as a fertiliser and to whitewash buildings.