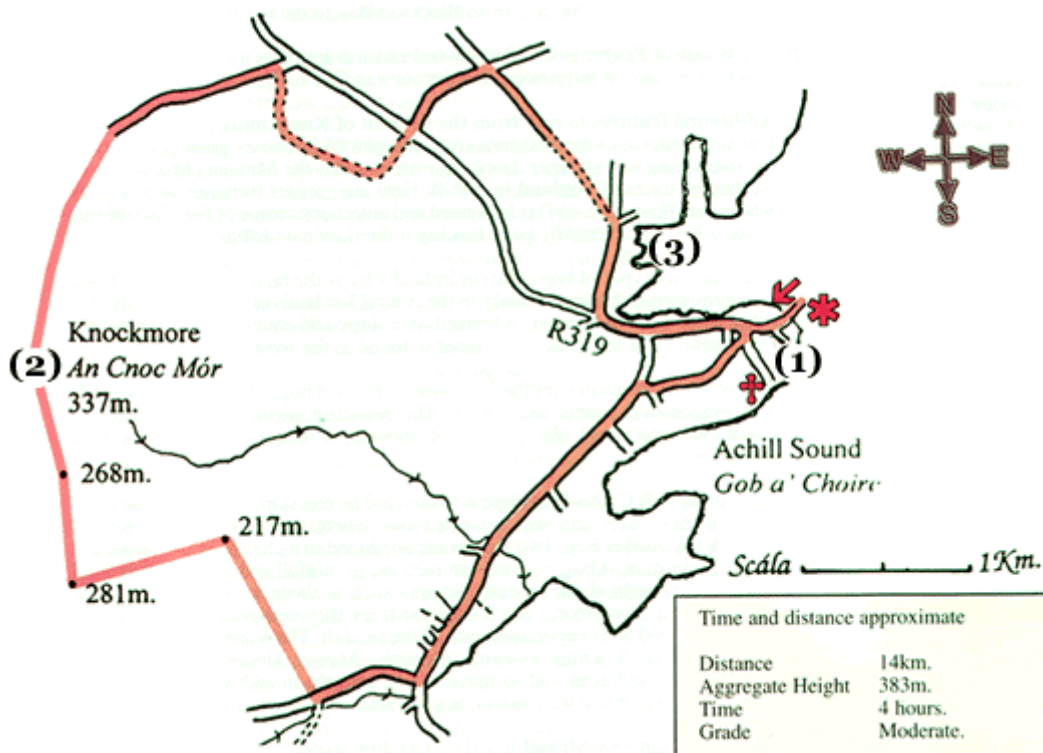


## Walk J – Achill Sound-Knockmore Loop

The walk starts at the Michael Davitt Bridge in Achill Sound (1). Travel westwards along the main road (R319) for approximately 450m and turn left at the church. Follow the next road on the right. Continue to the T-junction and turn left. This road is bordered by the tidal inlet of **Achill Sound**. After 2km where the tidal inlet almost borders the road turn right and continue on for 750m (note a track here on the left). Directly opposite the track leave the tarmac road and travel north-westwards across the open mountain in the direction of the hillock which rises to 217m. From here travel south-westwards towards the next highpoint at 281m. From here travel northwards to the 268m peak and from here to the summit of Knockmore at 337m (3). There is a wonderful view here of the south-western shoreline of Achill Island with its many creeks and inlets. The fishing village of Doega lies to the west. From the summit descend along the spur to the north-east to where it meets the tarmac road. Turn right here and approximately 500m further on turn right again onto a gravel track. Continue along the U-shaped track which converges with the main road (R319) at a crossroads. Go straight ahead here for 500m. At the next crossroads turn right on to the bog road. This emerges near the tidal inlet of Bleannahoey Strand (4). Turn right here and then left at the main road, and return to Achill Sound, your starting point.



## Walk J – The Achill Sound-Knockmore Loop (page 2)

### Points of Interest:

(1) **Achill Sound** is the main shopping area on the island. The Sound, a narrow tidal inlet, is spanned by a swing bridge named after Michael Davitt, which links the island to the mainland. It was built in 1888. Prior to this people crossed the channel at ebb tide. Achill Sound is known as *Gob a'Choire* in Irish, which refers to an area south of the bridge where the incoming tide from Clew Bay to the south meets with the tide from Blacksod Bay to the north.

(2) **Additional features** to note **from the summit of Knockmore** (337m) – To the east is the source of the Shraheens river where wild bilberries grow profusely in the late spring and summer. Looking west towards the Minaun Cliffs is one of the largest tracts of **bogland** in Achill. Here are various turbaries or turf plots where peat (known as turf) is harvested and is a major source of fuel. Two-thirds of the island is covered by peat, making it the dominant habitat.

There are two types of bog (peat) in Ireland. One is the raised bog which formed in depressions or hollows mainly in the central lowlands of the country, and the other is the blanket bog which formed on a slope and covers the landscape like a blanket (hence the name). The latter is found in the west of Ireland.

One of the prerequisites for the formation of blanket bog is high rainfall, so high that evaporation cannot keep pace. The resulting permanently waterlogged conditions encourage the growth of mosses, a major ingredient in peat formation.

Prior to 3000 B.C. this landscape was covered by trees, mainly Scots Pine. The roots of these trees can still be seen today where they have been preserved beneath the blanket bog. Two factors are attributed to a change in the landscape and the initiation of bog growth – an increase in rainfall and the effects of land clearance, brought about by early farmers such as those who resided at Céide Fields and at Slievemore. By felling the trees they removed the top canopy which absorbed and evaporated much of the rainfall. The water then fell directly on the surface, leaching essential minerals. Mosses flourished under these waterlogged conditions and so initiated bog growth. In addition tree seedlings could not grow on the wet, mossy, acidic surface and in time died out.

(4) Near **Bleannahoey Strand** is a rhododendron wood that is really spectacular in late May and early June.