

Glebe North

A group of four stone circles are situated north east of Cong in County Mayo. Although the circles are closely grouped they stand in three different townlands, Glebe, Tonleeaun also Nymphsfield. The first circle the northern one is a recumbent stone circle over sixteen metres in diameter with a low kerbed cairn located in the centre of the circle. Approximately twenty original thirty stones remain. The recumbent stone with its two flankers are situated on the northern side opposite the one remaining portal stone. Circle stands on a manmade platform. Discovery Map 38 & M 1626 5614. Coordinates are longitude: 53 32 55 W, latitude: 9 15 48 N. (April 2012) [\[ii\]](#)

Glebe North Stone Circle, also known as Cong North or 'Glebe 1' is situated near the village of Cong in Co. Mayo. The stone circle on a small raised mound measures approximately sixteen metres in diameter. Cong north is just one of four stone circles located within one hundred & seventy yards of each other. This circle originally had thirty stones now just twenty remain. Several may have collapsed or covered in earth with the tallest stone at 1.2 metres. One stone has a series of 'cup marks' that completely covers one of its sides. GPS: 53.54855, -9.26347 (28 Jul 2015) [\[iii\]](#)

This stone circle in a townland near Cong is part of a group of four circles known as 'Nymphsfield Stone Circle.' Glebe 1 or Cong North is the only one of the group sign marked on the Ballinrobe Road about three kilometres north - east from Cong. Twenty - three weathered stones remain in situ of approximately thirty original stones. The circle is sixteen metres in diameter. Traces of a low kerbed cairn may be viewed in the centre. An embanked recumbent stone circle with an orthostat at the west end. The other three stone circles lie further afield with one in the back garden of a bungalow. Discovered during 1699 by Welsh geographer Edmund Llwyd & his sketches of the stones were later published. During the nineteenth century: the father of Oscar Wilde became so intrigued with all the stone circles, cairns also standing stones north - east of Lough Corrib that he eventually moved to the area. He constructed a home 'Moytura House' (means Plain of the Pillars) then spent the last thirteen years of his life there. Several images feature on site. (17th July 2015) [\[iv\]](#)

Glebe East / Tonaleeaun

Within a small enclosure to the south east of Deanery Place or north glebe is a second circle. Remains of a ruined Cairn Circle at Glebe East or Tonleenaun Stone Circle lay under a group of hawthorn trees at a field to the south. At least twenty one stones were in the circle with thirteen still in situ. Circle stones were set into the inner side of a low earthen bank, possibly the flat topped stones were graded towards the south - west. Tallest stone at the south is 1.2 metres high. The lowest flat topped stones to the north approximately seventy - five centimetres in height. Several stones vary from 0.2 metres to 1.4 metres in height. Discovery Map 38: M 1617 5605. Coordinates are longitude 9 15 53 W, latitude 53 32 52 N. Images by Jim Dempsey & Deb Snelson. (April 2012) [\[v\]](#)

This archaeological site is located on the Ballinrobe road in the townland of Nymphsfield near Cong in Co. Mayo. It consists of five stone circles with large standing stones dated to the megalithic era. It includes a prehistoric underground dwelling that lies inside one of the circles. [\[vi\]](#)

The Irish Times in an article titled *Ring of Bright Fire* 13th January 2001 lists the Nymphsfield stone circle near Cong, Co. Mayo among the western group of the two hundred & forty stone circles identified within Ireland. [\[vii\]](#)

Sir William Wilde father of Oscar penned the following excerpt in regard to circles: 'Before proceeding with the narrative, we must here conduct our readers to the existing Danann monuments that accumulate in the fields opposite the glebe of Nymphsfield, to a portion of which local tradition has assigned the name of *Cath na bPunndn*, 'the battle of the sheaves.' There are here five very remarkable stone circles still remaining within the compass of a quarter of a square mile, and there are traces of others. The following examples are highly illustrative of these remarkable monuments. That figured

above consists of nineteen flat flagstones placed in a circle, each inclining outwards, perfectly smooth on the outside, but grooved and hollowed on their internal faces, which were evident]y those originally exposed to the action of air or water. A considerable portion of this circle has been removed and its interior, which is now planted, is fifty-four feet in diameter. Some of these stones are five feet over ground, are four feet wide, and eight or ten inches thick. At the south-west corner of the same field, opposite the glebe there is another circle, of which the subjoined is a graphic representation. It consists of a series of standing stones, and is one hundred and fifty-two feet in diameter. Within and around this and the adjoining fields, to the south and east, several perfect circles still exist, and the sites of others can still be traced within the confines of Cath na bPunnán; so that here was evidently the stronghold of one of the contending armies.' [viii]

Glebe Stone Circles are standing stones & national monument located approximately 1.6 kilometres east - northeast of Cong with Co. Mayo. Circles were first noted by Edward Lhuyd on his tour of Ireland in 1699. William Stukeley later reproduced Lhuyd's unpublished drawings. William Wilde connected them to the mythical Battle of Moytura. Four circles in a variety of styles include Glebe (*north*) in approximately sixteen metres in diameter. Twenty – three stones up to 1.2m in height have cup & ring marks. Nymphsfield 1 (*west*) approximately ten meters in diameter is the smallest circle. Tonaleeaun (*east*) is an embanked recumbent stone circle with an orthostat at the west end. Nymphsfield 2 (*south*) ten metres in diameter with nineteen stones. Several images feature on this site: <https://www.inspirock.com/ireland/cong/glebe-stone-circles-a3384261777>

Within the same townland (*M 163 561*) is a '*variant recumbent*' stone circle over sixteen metres in diameter with a low kerbed cairn located in the centre of the circle erected on an artificial platform. Approximately twenty of thirty stones remain. The recumbent stone with its two flankers are situated on the northern side opposite the sole remaining portal stone. On the opposite side of the ring a single portal limestone stone remains with bullaun - like hollows: <https://www.irishmegaliths.org.uk/mayo.htm>

During September 1945 a short cist that containing human remains was discovered at Tonaleeaun, near Cong, Co. Mayo. The cairn known locally as '*Game Cairn*' was circa pre historic early Bronze Age. Site was reported to the National Museum by Mr. Allerton Moore who provided a report on his survey. The mound measured circa thirty metres in width. It was encircled by a low rampart of stone possibly no more than 0.6m in height. The cist measured 1.06 metres in length by 0.8 metres in width. Formed of four edge - set limestone slabs covered with a single capstone. The following year when Allerton Moore returned to the site the first cist had been destroyed but a second cist was discovered. That cist consisted of a basal slab with a capstone but no side slabs. Instead sides were composed of compacted smaller stones. The cist contained a quantity of bones, which were handed into the Natural History Museum. The SMR records a stone circle, a stone circle possible, a cairn, a cist also a possible cist in this townland. (*presumably based on this NMI report*) Lohan (1999, 80–4) described one stone circle but did not list any other monuments or cists within this townland. Coordinates are 53.547985, -9.262100: <https://excavations.ie/report/1945/Mayo/0028598/>

Glebe South

The circle furthest south in the Glebe group of circles in Nymphsfield townland has been damaged. Remaining stones are situated in the north & north - west quadrant of the circle. A low bank approximately thirty metres in diameter may be viewed. Remaining stones appear as a selection of odd shapes or sizes. Discovery map 38: M 1625 5601. Coordinates are longitude: 9 15 49 W, latitude 53 32 51 N. Images by Jim Dempsey & Deb Snelson. (*April 2012*) [ix]

Footnotes

[ii] Glebe West (<http://www.megalithicireland.com/Glebe%20West%20Stone%20Circle,%20Mayo.html>) [Assessed 23rd November 2021]

[iii] Cong North Stone Circle (<https://visionsofthepastblog.com/2015/07/28/glebe-north-stone-circle-co-mayo/>) [Assessed 3rd June 2020]

[iv] Picturing Ireland (<https://picturingireland.blogspot.com/2015/07/magical-places-nymphsfield-stone.html>) [Assessed 3rd June 2020]

[v] Glebe West (<http://www.megalithicireland.com/Glebe%20West%20Stone%20Circle,%20Mayo.html>) [Assessed 23rd November 2021]

[vi] Points of Interest (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/towns-villages/cong/visitors-guide/points-of-interest-around-cong.html>) [Assessed 3rd June 2020]

[vii] Ring of Bright Fire (<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ring-of-bright-fire-1.269829>) [Assessed 3rd June 2020]

[viii] Nymphsfield Stone Circles (<http://www.carrowkeel.com/sites/cong/cong1.html>) [Assessed 2nd June 2020]

[ix] Glebe South (<http://www.megalithicireland.com/Glebe%20South%20Stone%20Circle,%20Mayo.html>) [Assessed 23rd November 2021]