

Lying eighty meters off Downpatrick Head on the north Coast of County Mayo is the iconic Dún Briste Sea Stack or 'broken dún.' It was first landed on by a helicopter during the 1980's. This was climbed once before in 1990. An amazing video of a climb during 27th August 2016 by Iain Miller & Paulina Kaniszewska to the summit may be viewed at this link! [\[iv\]](#)

Testimony from a visitor *'Just think about it for a sec: each one of these layers took time to form, to be laid down. Each starum tells a story about life on our planet from the very first sediments to the deposition of the next layer. And imagine the passage of time as layer by layer was added, and then the time for those layers to become solid sedimentary rock, each the floor of the ocean for some period of time. It just blows my mind how vividly deep time is displayed here'* appears on this site.' [\[v\]](#)

The Irish townland of Knockaun eighty metres off Downpatrick Head portrays a colossal fifty metre 'Sea Stack' called Dún Briste. Also Pul na Seantoinne is a cave at this head hollowed out by strong waves of the Atlantic Ocean. [\[vi\]](#)

Downpatrick Head is located three miles north of [Ballycastle](#) village. It stands one hundred & twenty - six ft above sea level. [\[vii\]](#)

Pul na Sean Tinne

Pul na Sean Tinne or 'Hole of the Old Fire' is a blowhole that provides the visitor with a view of the faultline that exists in the rock formation at Downpatrick Head in north Mayo. The softer rock has been eroded by the constant action of the ocean's waves. Evidence of this may be viewed at three locations where erosion has worked its way to the surface. During rough weather or stormy seas foam & vapour are exposed which gives the appearance of smoke of a fire from a distance. [\[viii\]](#)

Pul na Sean Tinne is often referred to as a blowhole within the Downpatrick Head area in north Mayo that provides a clear view of the faultline. An image features at this link. [\[ix\]](#)

Twenty - five men lost their lives within the channel below Poll na Seantainne (*a prominent Blowhole*) as the sea rose while they attempted to hide following the 1798 Rebellion. (*Gladman 1st August 2009*) [\[x\]](#)

St. Patrick's Church Ruins

Ruins of a small church, a stone cross & a holy well may be viewed on the summit of Downpatrick Head. A statue of St. Patrick was erected on Downpatrick Head during 1912 & a later statue replaced it early in the 1980's. The 'Sea Stack' was formed (*according to local tradition*) when a pagan chieftain refused to convert to Christianity then St. Patrick struck the ground with his crozier. A chunk of the headland collapsed into the ocean with the chieftain atop! It was a popular pilgrim destination with mass celebrated annually on Garland Sunday. (*the last Sunday in July*) [\[xi\]](#)

Legend stated St. Patrick was disturbed by a pagan chieftain, he prayed for deliverance with the result that the 'Sea Stack' moved away to the sea the next morning with the chieftain on top! [\[xii\]](#)

An ogre called Geodruisg made life difficult for St. Patrick at the headland. He prayed for deliverance from the tyrant. The next day the ogre with his residence vanished from the mainland. [\[xiii\]](#)

According to old local tradition St. Patrick at his Downpatrick Head church conflicted with a pagan chieftain or god 'Crom Dubh.' He refused to be converted to Christianity. He threatened St. Patrick with his everlasting fire. St. Patrick picked up a stone from the ground, scratched a cross on it then threw it onto the fire. The fire collapsed into the sea then a blowhole known as Pul na Sean Tinne formed. Crom Dubh retreated into his fortress at the top of the cliff. St. Patrick struck the ground with

his crozier with the result that the 'Sea Stack' along with the fortress were separated from the mainland with 'Crom Dubh' stranded. [\[xiv\]](#)

WW2 Watchtower / EIRE 64 Sign

During WW2 as the Irish State was declared neutral a series of lookout posts were constructed around Ireland's coastline. Connected by telephone to monitor or report all sea traffic to the Irish Coast Guard. Maintenance work carried out on LOP64 at Downpatrick Head summit preserves this historic feature. [\[xv\]](#)

A partial land image of the EIRE 64 of the sign on Downpatrick Head's summit was captured on 14th October 2014. [\[xvi\]](#)

An old WW2 watchtower at Downpatrick Head's Summit with The EIRE 64 sign is very visible on the headland. Plans are afoot to renovate the watchtower. (Anthony Hickey) [\[xvii\]](#)

The lookout post from WW2 & the stone watch tower are still in existence at Downpatrick Head. [\[xviii\]](#)

Commemorative Installation

The blowhole known as Poll na Seanloine is overlooked by a viewing platform on two levels: a raised walkway or berm around the blowhole's rim is symbolic of Ireland's ancient ring forts. A protective steel rod, flute fence surrounds the commemorative area. Designed by Washington architect Travis Price with the assistance of Catholic University of America architectural students during 2014. This Spirit of Place project incorporated a shelter at the blowhole where a plaque was erected to the memory of the men from Knockaun & Killeen who drowned while they hid at the base of blowhole when sea covered them following the 1798 Rebellion. (Anthony Hickey) [\[xix\]](#)

Footnotes

[\[iv\]](#) A Journey (<https://www.irishcentral.com/travel/best-of-ireland/a-journey-through-the-west-of-ireland-s-stunning-sea-stacks>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[\[v\]](#) This Amazing Photo (<https://www.dailyledge.ie/dun-briste-3843294-Feb2018/>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[\[vi\]](#) Dun Briste (<https://unusualplaces.org/dun-briste-an-impressive-sea-stack/>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[\[vii\]](#) Downpatrick Head (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/wild-atlantic-way/downpatrick-head.html>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[\[viii\]](#) Pul na Sean Tinne (<https://www.dunbriste.com/pul-na-sean-tinne.html>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]

[\[ix\]](#) Pul na Sean Tinne (<https://stairnaheireann.net/2018/01/27/pul-na-sean-tinne-hole-of-the-old-fire-2/>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]

[\[x\]](#) Downpatrick Head (https://www.themodernantiquarian.com/post/77366/fieldnotes/downpatrick_head.html) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[xi] Downpatrick Head(<https://www.ireland.com/en-us/articles/waw-downpatrick-head/>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[xii] Downpatrick Head (<http://www.geologypage.com/2016/05/downpatrick-head-county-mayo-ireland.html>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]

[xiii] Dun Briste (<https://unusualplaces.org/dun-briste-an-impressive-sea-stack/>) [Assessed 15th July 2020]

[xiv] St. Patrick (<https://www.mayo-ireland.ie/en/about-mayo/history/saint-patrick-downpatrick-head.html>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]

[xv] Look Out Post (<https://www.dunbriste.com/look-out-post-64.html>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]

[xvi] Eire 64 (<http://eiremarkings.org/257/>) [Assessed 16th July 2020]