

**Comhairle Contae  
Fhine Gall**  
Fingal County  
Council



*Revisiting Fingal's Monuments*

*FMA 2013*

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



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**Introduction:**

An ongoing objective of the Field Monument Advisor (FMA) is to advise landowners on the care and management of archaeological monuments in their ownership. To that end almost all of the 680 archaeological monuments listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) have been visited since the scheme's inception in Fingal in September 2007. Some such as those identified as 'monuments at risk' or in the ownership of Fingal County Council had been visited on more than one occasion (Baker 2010, 2012). In order to widen the context of the findings of this previous work and identify emerging trends it was decided to focus the 2013 FMA work on assessing a higher proportion of previously-visited monuments. It was proposed to undertake a closer analysis of these sites with the objective of not only recording their current condition, but to propose strategies for their future protection.

**Methodology:**

Almost 600 sites and monuments had been previously visited between the scheme's inception in September 2007 and the end of 2010. In all seventy-five different types of monument, from architectural fragments to windmills, in 174 different townlands, were visited and their condition recorded in that period. It was not going to be possible to revisit all monuments within the timeframe of the FMA 2013. Therefore, those monuments of lesser occurrence, ie. less than ten examples recorded within Fingal were prioritized. Remaining sites were picked randomly but an effort was made to encompass as wide a range of typology and as wide a geographical spread as was possible.

Sites and monuments that may have been visited first pre-2010 but were revisited in the intervening period were not counted in the baseline numbers for what is referred throughout this report as 2007-2010. For example all the monuments in Holmpatrick that were originally assessed in 2007 were not included in the baseline figures for 2007-2010 as these monuments were revisited in 2011 and are referenced in other studies.

All site visits are recorded in the Heritage Council's Field Monument Advisor Database. The 'Condition Status' of a monument is recorded as one of the following;

Destroyed/Levelled

Disimproved  
Greatly Disimproved  
Greatly Improved  
Improved  
No Change  
Not Known  
Not Visited

Whereas a number of counties have published inventories, County Dublin does not. Therefore the recorded information regarding Fingal's monuments is that contained within the unpublished files of the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), the fieldwork for which was undertaken in the early 1990s, and which was issued in 1994. Since 2011 the information pertaining to the RMP is available online at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie). This is essentially a sites and monuments record (SMR) which is updated frequently. This has resulted in hundreds of new sites being added to Fingal's archaeological resource and changes to the records of others, some of which are reflected below.



*Plate 1: Standing stone DU005-05702, Balrothery 1998 and 2013*

Those sites labelled as 2007-2010 have been assessed by category against the original RMP of the 1990s so 'no change' or 'disimproved' applies to the condition of the monuments in that period in comparison to that in the 1990s. Similarly those sites labelled 2013 are the sites and monuments assessed using the categories, against the 2007-2010 FMA visits. This is particularly important to remember when viewing the figures and discussions around the 'no change' category. For example the bridge at Grace Dieu (DU007-015007) is in the 'disimproved' category for 2007-2010 as due to vegetation growth it had disimproved in the intervening period of fifteen years from when it was first surveyed. However it is in the 'no change' category in 2013 as it had

not changed substantively in the latter period but that does not infer its condition is any less 'disimproved'.

The baseline 2007-2010 number of monuments visited for the purposes of this study is 591. Of those 258 were revisited from August –November 2013 which constitutes a revisit rate of 44%. These figures form the basis of analysis presented below. A further twelve sites which fall outside the criteria of this study were also visited, six were additions to the SMR and as such had not been assessed in the 2007-2010 period, while the remainder had been revisited in the intervening 2011, 2012 years. These will be discussed separately.

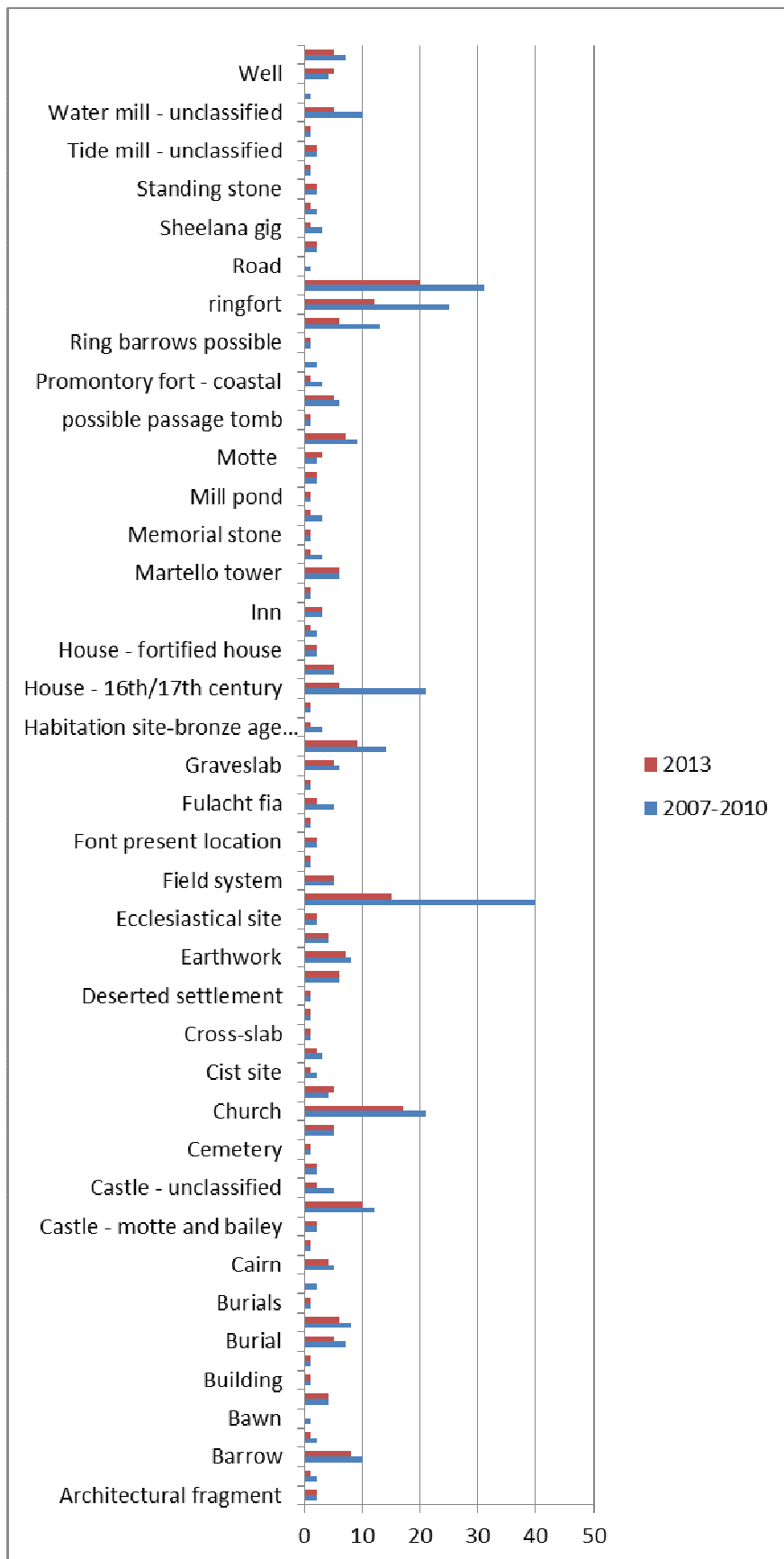
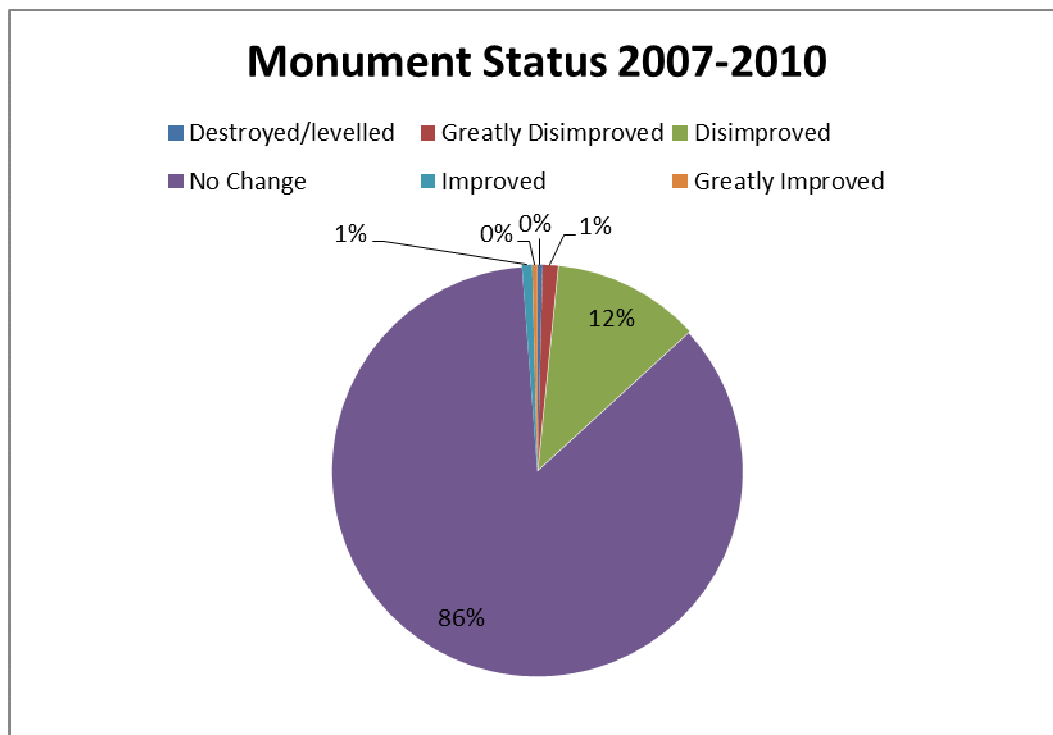


Fig. 1 Comparison 2007-2010 and 2013 site visits

## Fingal Monuments Status

The following comparative analysis is based on a total of 258 monuments.



*Figure 2. Monument Status-comparison between 1990s and 2007-2010*

At 86% the vast majority of the sites reviewed in the 2007-2010 had not changed substantially in the fifteen year period from when they were first surveyed for the RMP. Although the rapid changes within Fingal in terms of population increase and the attendant development has had an impact the rural nature of parts of the county, non-visible and conversely highly visible monuments have survived without significant change.

Almost the entire range of FMA database condition categories are in use for the 2007-2010 period. The destroyed/levelled category applies to Newpark house (DU011-076), described in the RMP as a 'Fayre House in the Demesne' of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. On the FMA 2008 visit it was in the process of being levelled, the machine halted upon a mound of rubble before the last surviving hearth and wall. This single example represented as 0% in Figure 2 above.



*Plate 2: DU011-076 Newark House 2008 & 2013*

Three more monuments were ‘greatly disimproved’. Two holy wells at Hollywood Great (DU004-022) and Stephenstown (DU005-003) were affected, the former by toxic dumping, the latter by tillage, while the possible ringfort at Ballymadun (DU006-0010) formed part of the site licenced for a topsoil deposition. In contrast a single site was ‘greatly improved’. This was Knocknagin House (DU001-012) that was restored over thirteen years by its owners who also published a paper on its history in the local historical society journal (Berney, 1999).



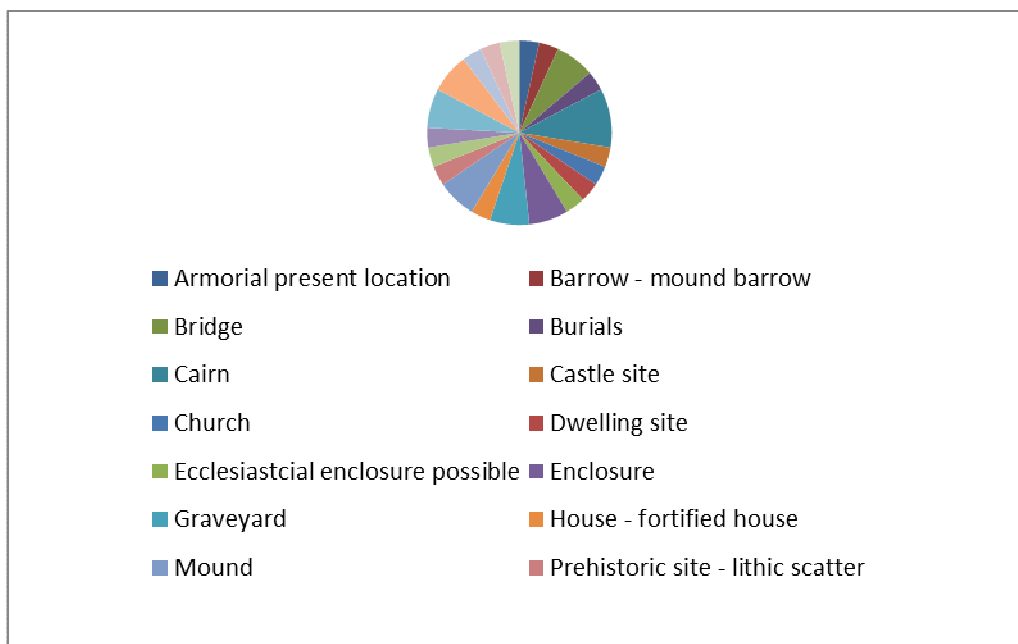
*Plate 3: DU005-008 Inch mound, Balrothery*

Just two sites fall into the ‘improved’ category. The mound at Inch (DU005-008) was described in the RMP as having been poached by cattle and eroded by cultivation. Since then it has been improved by the establishment of a buffer zone that has



mitigated any impact of the cultivation but also by making it visible as a grass covered mound within a field of tillage. The other ‘improved’ monument is Corr castle (DU015-025), a tower house formerly on wasteland at the edge of Howth Estate. Test excavation carried out there in 1998 by Ronan Swan & Christine Baker improved the knowledge of its nature and extent and while it’s surrounding context was changed by the insertion of a development the towerhouse was stabilised, vegetation removed and secured becoming a focal point for the open space.

A total of 12% of the 2007-2010 monuments reviewed here can be ascribed to the ‘disimproved’ category’.

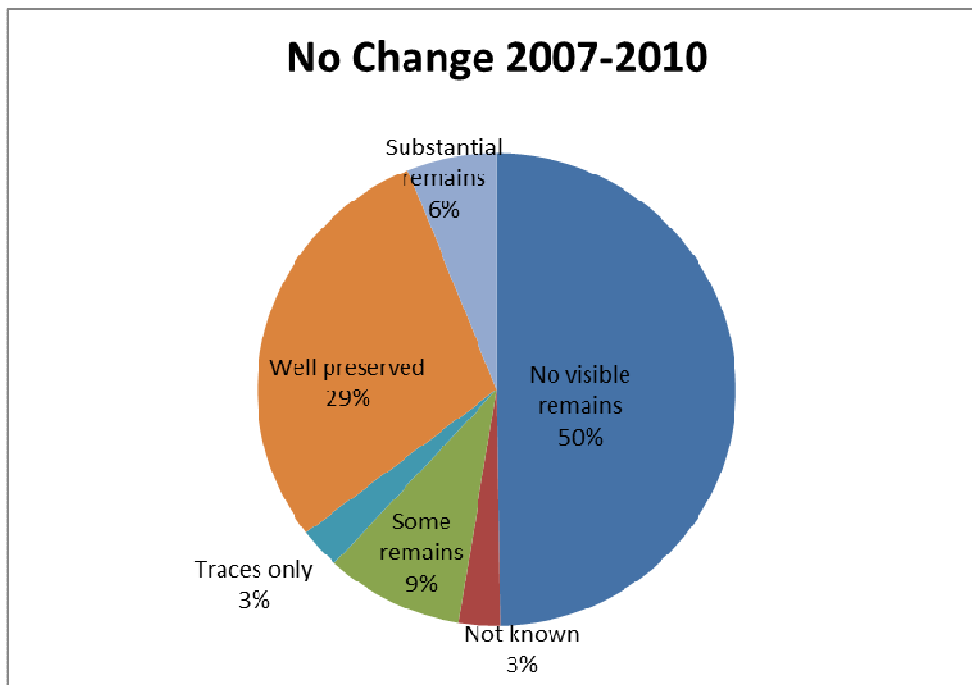


*Figure 3: Disimproved Category between 1990s and 2007-2010*

As can be seen from Figure 3 there is one or two examples of a wide range of typologies from bridges to enclosures and from graveyards to lithic scatters. The reasons for disimprovement are also as diverse from development to visitors, and from reclamation/improvement to cultivation. There is no discernible correlation between the site type and the disimprovement suffered. For instance the mound at Garristown (DU003-006) was affected by development, the one at Newbarn (DU011-004) by poaching. One of the bridges at Grace Dieu (DU007-015007) is affected by vegetation (Plate 4), the other (DU007-015008) by land reclamation and farm improvements.



*Plate 4: DU007-015007 Grace Dieu Bridge*



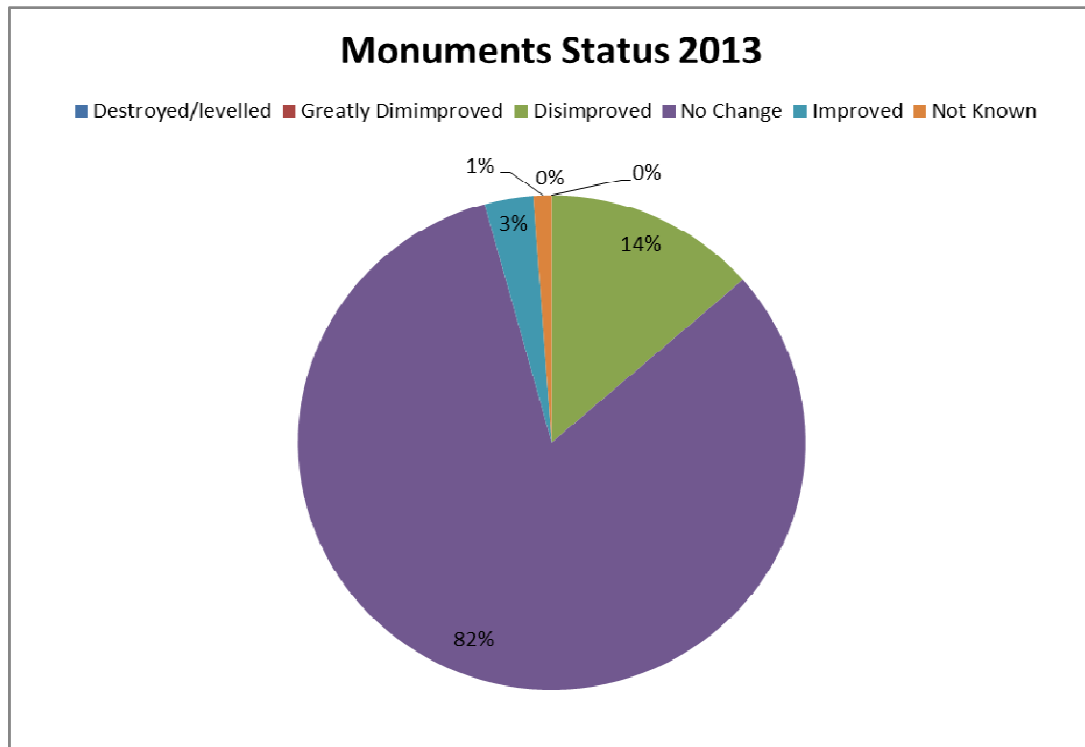
*Figure 4: No Change Category 2007-2010*

As illustrated on Figure 4, a total of 50% of the sites that remained unchanged had no visible remains. The vast majority (62%) of those non-visible remains are within either arable or pasture farmland and were identified for the RMP through aerial photography and cartographic analysis. Others by their morphology are subterranean-cists, souterrain or burials-while some such as lithic scatters are not visible unless the ground has been ploughed. A caveat to this is that we don't have any measure of the cumulative effect of cultivation on these sub-surface sites, should there be one.



*Plate 5: DU008-016 Newtowncorduff Moated site on the ground and from the air (Bing)*

The next largest group (29%) of unchanged monuments are those within the ‘well preserved’ category. In contrast to the non-visible monuments just 9.5% of the well-preserved monuments are within farmland. It is unsurprising that this category is populated by monuments that are structural and highly visible in their surroundings, the majority of which are associated with church and graveyards. This category also contains the National Monuments of Fingal.



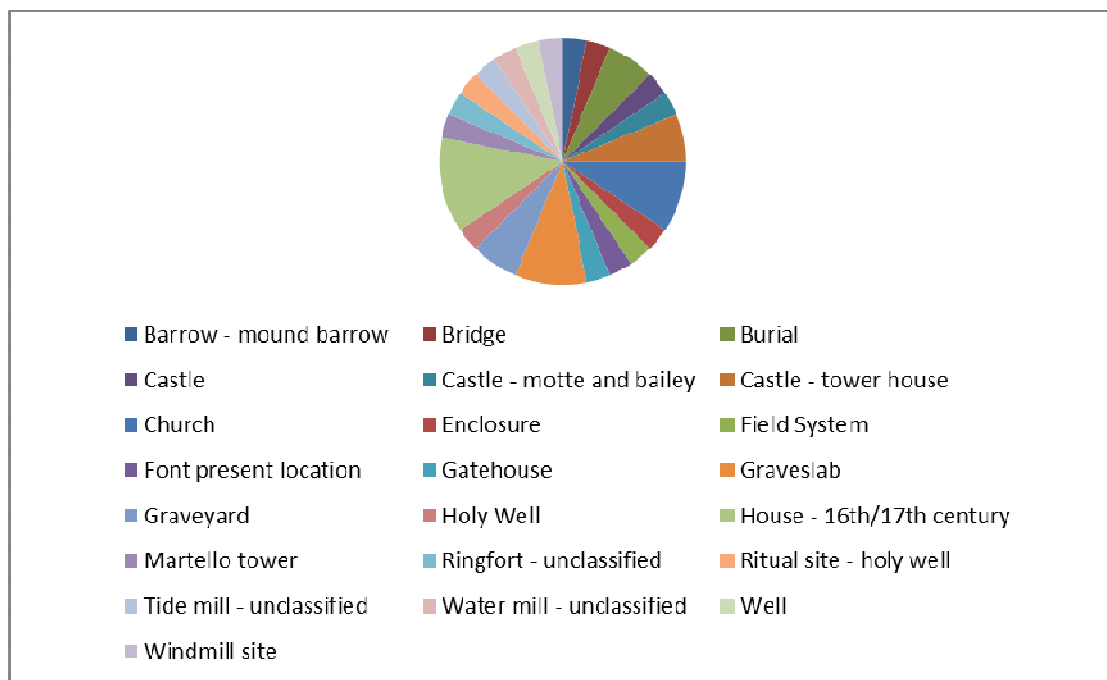
*Figure 5: Monument Status 2013*

As can be seen from Figure 5 no monuments have been ‘destroyed/levelled’ or ‘greatly disimproved’ in the period between 2010 and 2013. Also positive is that the number of ‘improved’ sites has risen. Of the eight monuments in the latter category only two have been physically improved in that overgrowth has been removed from the graveyard at Fieldstown (DU011-002) and the roof of Dunsoghley castle (DU014-005) has been repaired. For the remaining, while the physical site remains unchanged the knowledge around them has improved immeasurably.

The Discovery Programme undertook geophysical survey at the RMP at Blackland (DU008-052) in 2012 where the details of successive enclosures noted on the aerial photography were clarified. In addition a previously unknown circular enclosure was identified in the adjoining field to the east. Similarly the Discovery Programme also undertook geophysical survey in Mallow in proximity to the battlefield site (DU004-032). Supposedly the scene of the battle of the Odba in the 9<sup>th</sup> century the geophysical survey uncovered a possible fertae (Ger Dowling *pers. comm.*).

The polytunnels at Forrest Great have been removed but of more interest was the geophysical survey undertaken as part of a planning application. In the RMP the sites were described as a chapel and burial (DU011-042) ground based on a tradition of bones been exposed in the ‘chapel field’. Geophysical survey carried out by Jo Leigh (12R0059) at the site and an archaeological complex of 100m NS was defined. This complex was characterised by a circular ditch-type responses (55m diameter) with internal pits and rectilinear responses extending from this (Leigh, 2012, 8).

A total of 14% of the 2013 monuments reviewed here can be ascribed to the ‘disimproved’ category’.



*Figure 6: 'Disimproved' Category 2013*

As can be seen from Figure 6 there are again one or two examples of a wide range of typologies. In comparison to the 2007-2010 disimproved category there are notably more typologies represented within the 2013 disimproved category and as a consequence many more monuments that previously were unchanged from the original early 1990s survey have disimproved in the last three years.

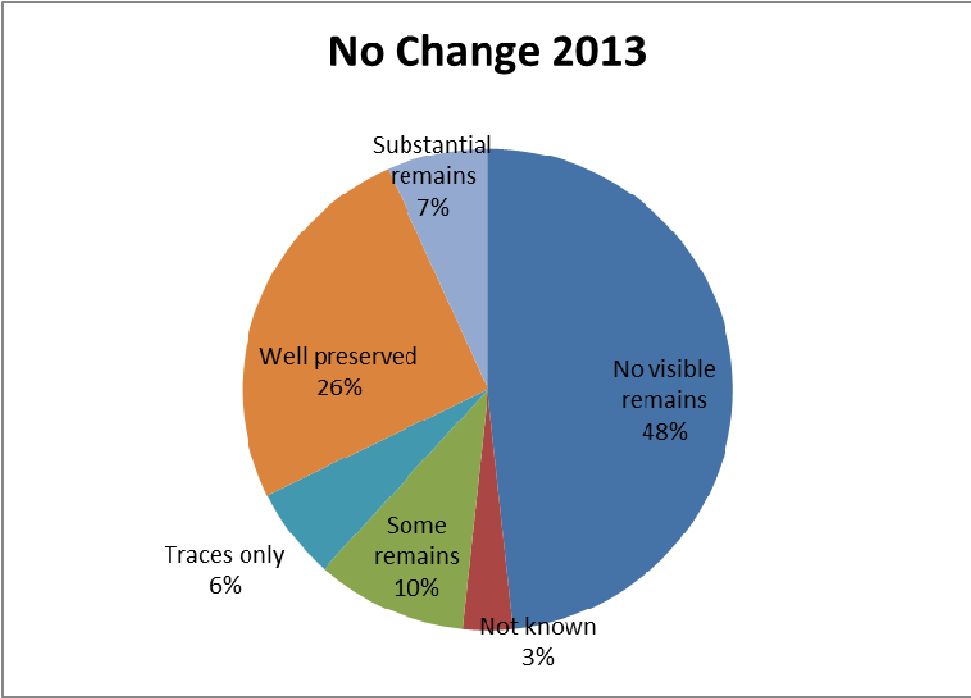


Figure 7: No Change Category 2013

As can be seen in Figure 7 there are only marginal changes (see Fig.4) in the ‘no change’ category of the 2013 monuments which can be explained by the change in status of some monuments. The pattern established in regard to the 2007-2010 whereby the ‘no visible remains’ are principally associated with agricultural land the ‘well preserved’ with structural monuments is also reflected in the 2013 monuments.

### Monument Status Comparison:

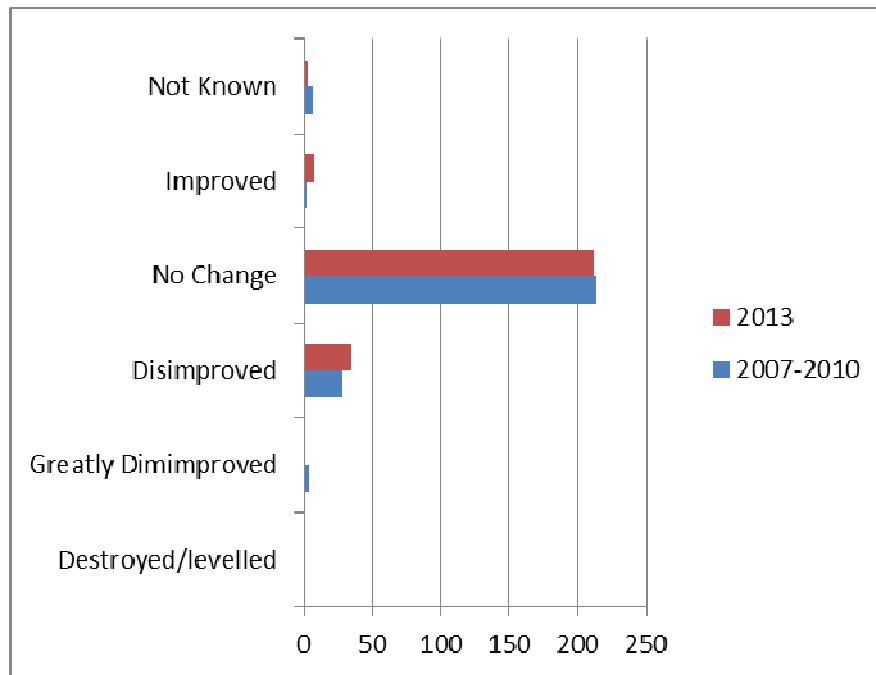
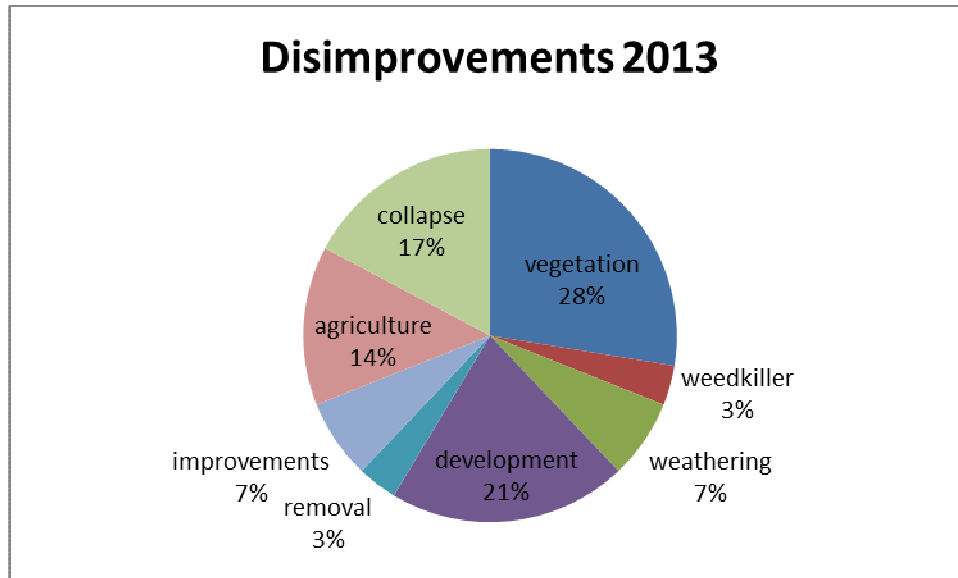


Figure 8: Status comparison

Of the twenty-nine monuments in the 2007-2010 ‘disimproved’ category, just four monuments have further disimproved, one was not accessible on the day of visit, but the remainder have been recatergorised as ‘no change’ in 2013. It is however essential to bear in mind that these monuments have merely not deteriorated in condition or context any further but still remain damaged or of lesser condition than they where, when originally surveyed for the RMP.

A total of twenty-nine monuments in the 2007-2010 ‘no change’ category have been reclassified as ‘disimproved’. In terms of typology there is no discernible pattern with a range of monuments having deteriorated.



*Figure 9: Factors in the 'disimprovement' category 2013*

The chart clearly illustrates that the leading cause of disimprovement to monuments between 2010 and 2013 is the growth of vegetation. In the eight cases where vegetation has taken over to such an extent to substantially disimprove the condition of the monuments, ownership is a factor. Two are bridges- Coldbow (DU017-016) and Roganstown (DU011-082)-in private ownership. Coldbow bridge is not in use having been fenced off for health and safety reasons as it is in the grounds of a children's residential centre. The lack of use has allowed the vegetation to overcome the medieval bridge structure to the point it is almost obscured from view. In contrast Roganstown bridge is crossed by by a regional road, however the vegetation is along the western façade and detritus has amassed around the cut waters.



*Plate 6: DU017-016, Coldbow Bridge, 2013*



The ownership of the remaining monuments has changed. For example the three monuments at Turvey have disimproved as the Golf Club there has been for sale for a number of years and lack of use and maintenance has allowed the sites to move from overgrown to completely inaccessible. Likewise the owners of Rush martello tower (DU008-015) have passed away in recent years and the site tower cannot be accessed because of overgrowth. The motte at Brazil (DU011-027) was previously being grazed by cattle and the top of the motte was still accesible. At the time it was mooted that this area would form part of the linear Ward River Valley park, however it is as yet unclear if Fingal County Council have assumed ownership.

Development is a close second to vegetation in the addition of sites to the disimproved category. This may reflect the slowdown in economic development as a whole but it should also be noted that a number of the visited sites are in pre-planning proposal stage and their context may subsequently be modified. Of the twelve 'additional' monuments revisited (refer p.5) six were additions to the SMR since 2010 and four of those are under threat from development. The already extensive archaeological landscape at Kilmartin was expanded through the identification of cropmarks to include three enclosures and a ring ditch. These were further investigated in advance of development through geophysical survey and two archaeological test excavations (12E063). The excavator concluded that 'aerial photographs and follow up surveys do survive below ground and should therefore be given a minimum level of protection. The recommendation of monitoring of groundworks in the vicinity of any substantial development is a reasonable one...' (Kavanagh 2012).

### **Previous Studies.**

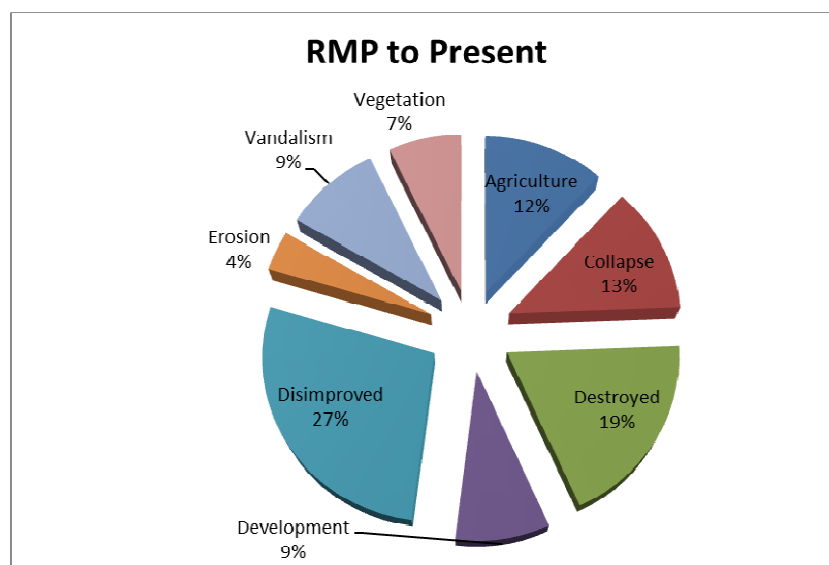
The *Monuments at Risk* study (Baker, 2010) identified 88 monuments as being ‘at risk’ using the same methodology of comparing their condition with that described in the RMP record. Using the nomenclature of the FMA database a total of six categories of direct threat were identified. That is there is a direct physical threat that would result in the damage, destruction or removal of an archaeological monument. These consist of agriculture, erosion, collapse, drainage, development and vandalism. A further two categories were included whereby the threat was such that the monument as recorded in the record of monuments and places was destroyed/levelled or has disimproved. A total of twenty-five different types of monument or 12% of the recorded monuments of Fingal were identified as being at risk.

The *Monuments at Risk Update* (Baker 2012) sought to determine the condition of the previously identified monuments at risk after a relatively short period of time. It concluded the number of monuments identified as ‘at risk’ had risen to 107. This is based on the revisiting of the original 88 monuments and work on a concurrent study on the monuments in the ownership of Fingal county Council, a total of 143 monuments or almost 16%. This figure while specific to only a segment of Fingal’s archaeological resource indicates a worrying trend of deterioration

## Emerging Trends

### *1. Rise in the Rate of Deterioration*

The *Fingal's Monuments at Risk* reports (Baker 2010, 2012), through the comparison of monument condition relative to the three negative categories of the FMA database (Destroyed/Levelled, Greatly Disimproved & Disimproved) identified a rise in the deterioration of the archaeological resource in Fingal. In 2010 the number of archaeological monuments, whose condition had deteriorated to such an extent as to be considered 'at risk', was 12%. A year later that number had risen to 16% and presently in 2013 it stands at 19%.



*Figure 10: Monument Condition decline from the RMP survey (1993) to 2013*

The above Figure 10 is based on a collation of the previous Monument at Risk studies and totals 127 monuments or 19% of Fingal's entire archaeological resource which can be defined as becoming 'at risk' over the past twenty years.

To put these results in a wider context a comparable study was undertaken in 1998 *The Archaeological Features at Risk (AFAR) Project* (O'Sullivan, O'Conor & Kennedy, 2000). Seven study areas around the country were surveyed to compare the existing monuments and their condition with the 1400 that had been recorded for County Archaeological Inventories within the previous 15-20 years. After removal of previously destroyed and non-location of monuments the baseline figure for analysis was 892 monuments. It concluded that 17% of monuments had been interfered with (destroyed or damaged to varying degrees) since visited in preparation for the County

Archaeological Inventories (roughly 1978-1998). The destruction of country-wide monuments (pre-boom) was directly linked to land improvement for more intensive farming and as the majority of these monuments were in agricultural settings this figure correlates. In Fingal agriculture affected 12% of monuments in the 1993-2013 period.

Surprisingly the figure (Fig.10) for Fingal monuments threatened by development is 9% for a twenty year timespan that encompassed the Celtic Tiger period of construction and not only the increased sub-urbanisation of Fingal but the expansion of supply industries such as quarries, as well as road networks, golf courses and industrial estates. It is all the more surprising when compared to the AFAR study for the pre-boom years in other counties that indicated 9% of monuments were affected by development there. However it was found in the 2010 *Monument's at Risk* report that at least a third of the archaeological monuments in the 'destroyed' category had been as a result of development so a perhaps a more accurate picture can be seen in Figure 11 below. Obviously the presence of RMP sites should have been identified within the planning process prior to the construction of large housing and industrial estates and it is disturbing that 7% of the destroyed/ levelled category appear to have been missed.

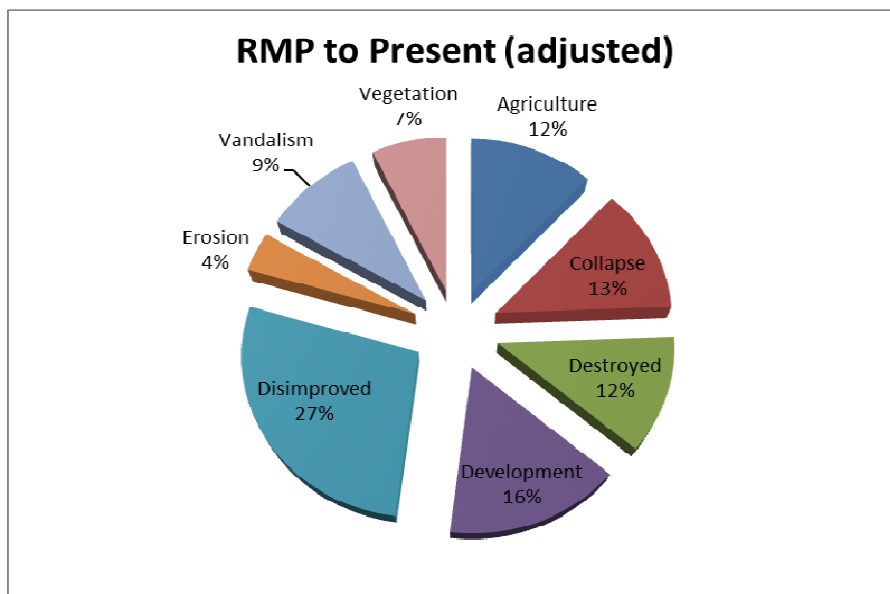


Figure 11: Adjusted development threat, 1993-2013

## 2. *Ownership*

The establishment of the exact ownership of land has always presented difficulties over the course of the FMA scheme. Although it wasn't possible within the short period available for the current tranche of work to fully study changes in ownership it can be noted that there was a change in ownership or potential change of ownership for at least 4% of the monument revisited. In one example the property which contains a holy well (DU008-01007) within its rear garden went up for sale with a month of being revisited. The danger of course is that the knowledge surrounding the archaeological monument or even of its existence may be lost.



*Plate 7: DU008-01007 St Macullin's Well, Lusk*

It was established in the *Assessing Ownership* report (Baker 2010) that Fingal County Council is the largest single landowner in terms archaeological monuments, in that 20% of the entirety of Fingal's monuments fall under its remit. Interestingly what was shown in the current tranche of work was a link between a specific type of threat and FCC ownership-specifically those monuments affected by vandalism are in the ownership of the local authority. Of those revisited in 2013 none were in FCC ownership (those having been the subject of the 2012 *Managing Fingal's Archaeological Resource* report) and none of the 'disimproved' category were subject

to vandalism. Conversely, outside the current study two monuments -Rush Towerhouse and Mulhuddart Church-last visited in 2012 but revisited in 2013 are in the ownership of Fingal County Council both of which were further subject to vandalism.

### *3. The Grey Literature Abyss*

In the twenty year period since the field work for the RMP was undertaken there has been a myriad of archaeological studies, geophysical surveys, test excavations etc. across the county. The information contained within these is however languishing as grey literature. An example is of a site of a motte and bailey at Newtown (DU014-013) which is currently for sale as commercial property. While the site is marked as an RMP the current entry on [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) (uploaded 2011) describes its destruction in 1952 and that some pre-development testing in its vicinity in 2001 failed to uncover archaeological deposits. This gives the impression that the archaeological remains at this site are not significant. However geophysical survey undertaken in 2004 by Earthsound Ltd. established that there were extensive remains in the area including a hitherto unknown burnt mound. A subsequent programme of archaeological testing by IAC Ltd confirmed the presence of a fosse 5m in width and suggested an extensive buffer zone. None of this latter information is easily accessible.



*Plate 8: Newly discovered monument Auburn, Malahide, Google Maps*

In the 2010 report *Assessing Fingal's Archaeological Resource* (Archer, 2010) it was found that 171 or 44% of the 385 licences issued in the period 1999-2009 had been undertaken at RMP sites-something not yet reflected in any easily accessible database. A review of the available licences issued between 2009 and the present show a further 39 or 44% of 88 licences issued pertain to or are in proximity to an RMP. Similarly in the *Assessing Fingal's Geophysical Resource* (Baker 2011) 102 licences for geophysical surveys were issued, 57% of which were undertaken in relation to RMPs. This information is in the archives of the statutory authorities-the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland-or in the possession of the archaeologist, the developer or forms part of the planning file. However it is not easily accessible and because of its disparate nature can often be overlooked in archaeological studies that rely exclusively on the [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) where the entries have not been updated.

#### *4. Threats to the monument resource do not remain static.*

As demonstrated above the threat to the monuments can change. Whereas monuments may no longer be subject to the threat of development they may have now be subject to that of agriculture. For example numerous RMPs threatened by the development of Metro North are instead affected by cultivation. Natural threats such as climate change, flooding, coastal erosion, and weather events can have not only a cumulative damaging effect but can result in dramatic incidents, such as the graveyard collapse at Howth.

Just over a quarter of all the archaeological monuments of Fingal have no visible remains. Of those revisited in 2013 a total of 50% have no visible remains having been identified through aerial photography and cartographic analyses, and the majority of those are within either arable or pasture farmland (Plate 8). There is a possible threat in terms of the nature of the agricultural activity here changing. A number of pasture fields which have been identified as containing archaeological sites have been ploughed 'for the first time in living memory'. For example the ecclesiastical enclosure (DU005-024003) at Grange, was within Milverton estate which was owned by the same family for decades. Sold several times in recent years it is now under tillage which may have a cumulative detrimental effect on the remains.

There is an obvious need for the ongoing monitoring and management of the condition of the archaeological resource.

#### *5. Monument context & awareness*

Sites for the construction of monuments were deliberately chosen for their setting, in the landscape, on territorial boundaries, because they were intervisible with other monuments. Incorporating a mound into a golf course such as at Astagob, building playing pitches around monuments like at Saint Helens and Corduff or surrounding a standing stone with a housing estate at Balrothery, materially changes the context in which the sites were constructed, devaluing their archaeological importance in the process.

It also must be emphasised that underlying the physical threats to the archaeological resource it is a fundamental lack of awareness, not only regarding the presence of the archaeological sites and monuments but the consequences of actions and inaction. There are approximately 35 recorded monuments within the parks and open space of Fingal, the majority of which have a visible presence in the form of towers, wells, castles etc... However it is often not realised that they are recorded monuments as they don't conform to what the perception of archaeology is-for example Skerries Mills and the Martello towers are not readily associated with being recorded archaeological monuments.

For those monuments that do not have a visible presence or their presence is such that its significance is not immediately obvious there is even less awareness. This particularly applies to archaeological sites that were identified in advance of development and were preserved in situ within the green space of housing estates. Major sites such as those at Oldtown-Mooretown (now to become Fingal's first Archaeology Park), Mountgorry, in Swords, Chapel Farm estate in Lusk, Rosepark enclosures and holy well in Balrothery were of such importance or scale that it was deemed that they were to be preserved and protected. Yet the majority of people living in the housing estates that surround them are unaware of their existence-although an exhibition was undertaken as part of the FMA work in 2013 specifically to address this. Those who maintain the green space are also unaware and often those who plan for their use know nothing of what lies beneath. This leaves the



archaeological resource extremely vulnerable to damage, removal, inappropriate insertion of services, landscaping, and planting.

### **Recommendations:**

#### *1. Ongoing Monitoring & Management of Monument Condition*

A high percentage of the recorded monuments of the sites and monuments of Fingal have remained relatively unchanged. A measure of this can be ascribed to the mindfulness of the landowners. Almost all of the farmers who were talked to in the course of the FMA Scheme thus far were not only aware of the monuments on their land but of the significance of them. One example is that at Folkstown Little (DU005-001), the site of a chapel where it is decreed in the wills of the family that field should never be ploughed.

However economic times being what they are a number of farmers are renting out their land, the nature of the farming practice on those lands is changing and in many more cases such as at Kilmartin the land is being sold for development. It is therefore essential that the condition of the archaeological resource continues to be monitored with a view to better management either through the FMA Scheme or under the auspices of a County Archaeologist in order to ensure the continued protection of the archaeological monuments.

#### *2. Conversion of Information to Knowledge*

The generation of important new information through survey, excavation and aerial photography should be synthesised not only with the available RMPs but be easily accessible to the public and heritage professionals alike. As a continuously inhabited landscape the surviving visible remains are just half the story. There is an obvious need to correlate all the available archaeological information with a view to presenting it in multiple formats-GIS layers, accessible report archive, educational tools for schools, website and synthesis publications for the public-which will ensure both an increase in the awareness of the scale and significance of Fingal's archaeological resource and ensure its ongoing protection.

### *3. Fieldwork & the FMA Scheme*

The recent addition of over c.200 previously unknown monuments to the SMR on [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) discovered through Tom Condit's (DAHG) survey of Bing Maps is indicative of the true level of the archaeological resource of Fingal. These sites present as cropmarks and probably have no visible presence in the field, their owners as yet unaware of their presence. It would be an important stage of the FMA Scheme to identify these sites on the ground and inform the owners of their presence.

#### **Conclusions:**

The archaeological resource, just like the threats to it, are not static. While the level of 'disimprovement' to the recorded monuments and sites (RMPs) within Fingal is accelerating, rising from 12% to 19% in three years, there has been in the same period literally hundreds of previously unknown archaeological sites discovered. There is now the prospect, through this expanding archaeological resource to transform our understanding of the 'story' of Fingal and to use this knowledge both as an education tool and as the basis for heritage tourism. The challenge is to continue to protect this constantly changing resource the opportunity is to celebrate it.

Christine Baker 27.11.13

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