

LOCH CHONAILL RAILWAY WALK

The Railway

It was constructed by the Lough Swilly Railway Company and the route went from Derry City to Burtonport. The construction of the railway brought hope to many following years of hardship. The terrain to construct a Railway on was difficult to say the least, negotiating Granite rocks, hills, valleys and bogland.

This route was the second largest narrow gauge Railway ever constructed.

The entire building materials were sourced locally i.e. the timber from locally grown trees, the lime, sand and the stone was quarried at the top of the hill. The stone from the quarry at the Mullach Bhan was also used for road building and constructing the rail track. It is now to be used as an overflow car park for the walkway.

The Train

Locally the train was called the Mhuc Dhubh (the black pig) as it chugged its way through the landscape.

The train first came to this area in 1903 and stopped running in 1940. It was innovative of its time and its primary function was to take fish out of Burtonport and transport goods and people in and out of North West Donegal. Burtonport and the offshore islands especially Inis Mhic an Doirn (Rutland) were a hive of activity at this time. The ruins of the factories are still visible today. The train ceased to run as lorries were being used to transport fish and goods much faster than the train. The route of the train did not go through populated areas so it was of little benefit for transporting people. During the time of the railway tensions were high amongst locals and the British Army (Black and Tans). It is written that there were 3 ambushes along the railway past the shores of Loch Chonail through to Crolla between the British Army and Local Freedom Fighters. The railway walk runs alongside Loch Chonail lake.

The Old School

It was the local school from 1863-1929. Prior to this English Law dictated that education was forbidden to the natives in their attempt to keep the people ignorant and easier to control. Hedge schools were in operation prior to this and were considered illegal.

The site was donated by Jimmy Paddy Bonner to the Parish Priest.

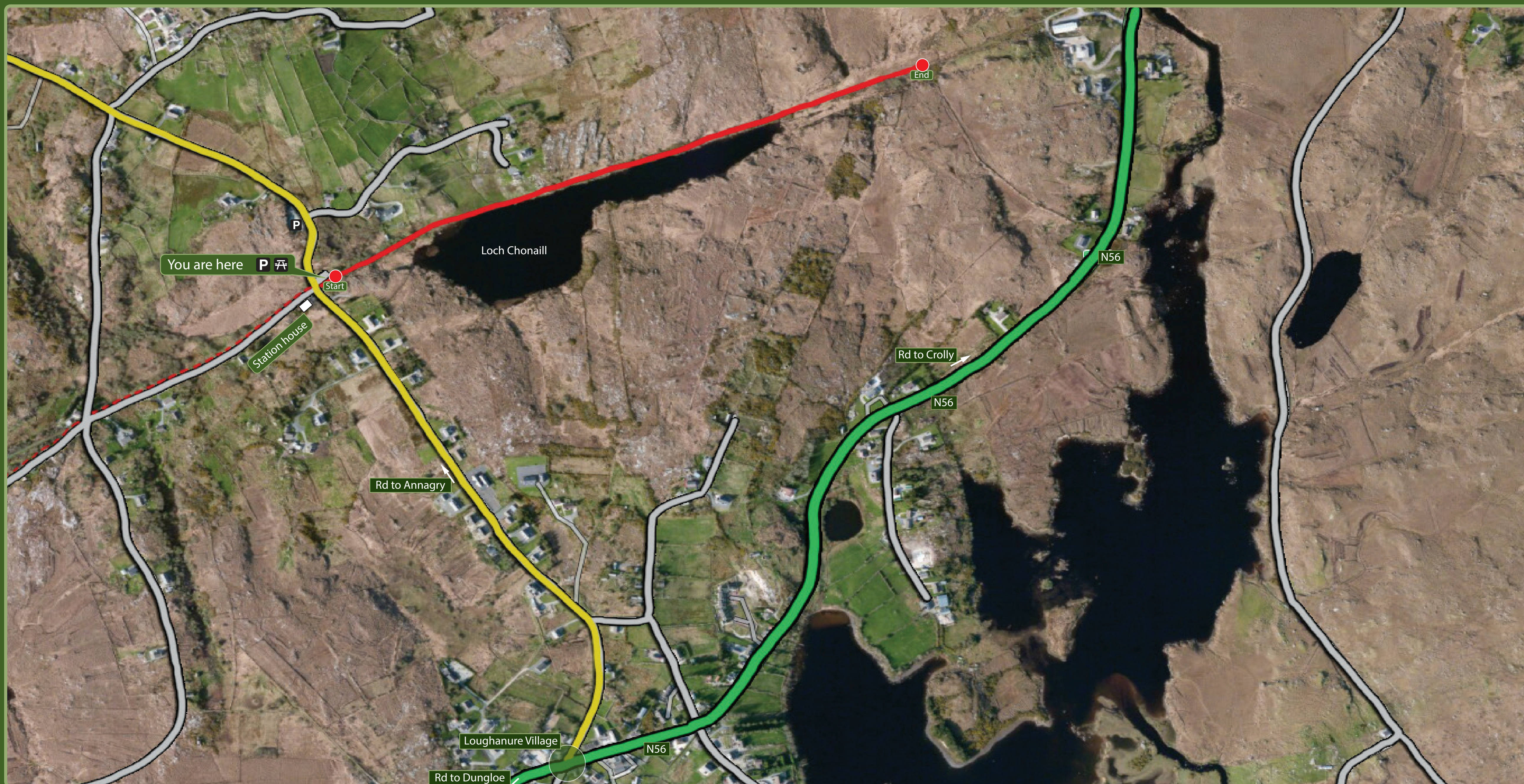
The building of the school was completed by the local men on a voluntary basis. The original roof was thatched but that was short lived as the sparks from the train made it a high risk of fire hence the replacing of the thatch with slates. This was funded by the Railway Company. The ruins of the school have recently been unearthed after being hidden for many years.

Anyone who had Relatives attending Loch Chonail School may fondly remember them recounting tales as children of running to the window daily to watch the train pass by. The Railway House is still very well preserved today and an evident landmark of how the railway was once a strong feature in this part of Donegal.

Notice:

Loch Chonail Railway Walk

Some of the property traversed by the name of trail is private property. Access is available by kind permission of all the landowners/holders on the route. It is understood that persons entering do so by permission with the consent of the landowner and no matter how often they enter, or in what numbers, they do not do so as of right. No amount of expenditure by the partners to this agreement or by private individuals on the route being used will alter this position. As further evidence of the permissive nature of the access, the route will be closed for one day per year in agreement with the landowners. Nothing in this notice shall impact or address any pre-existing public rights of way.



LOCH CHONAILL RAILWAY WALK

Trail Start / Finish: Car Park at Old Loughanure School
Distance / Time to complete: 2.2km (return) / ca.20-30 minutes
Terrain: Purpose built path Total Climb: 3m Format: Linear Walk
Degree of Difficulty: Multi access - Flat smooth trail, suitable for all users including people with reduced mobility, wheelchair users, using crutches, with a buggy, with small children, older people and so on. Suitable for all levels of fitness.
Minimum Gear: Normal outdoor footwear and rain gear
Grid ref: B 810 176 Map: OSI Discovery Series Sheet 1
See also: www.irishtrails.ie, www.letswalkdonegal.com, www.discoverireland.ie/walking

1. Plan ahead and prepare
 2. Be considerate of others
 3. Respect farm animals and wildlife
 4. Leave what you find
 5. Dispose of waste properly
- www.leavenotraceireland.org

Dogs under effective control welcome

For comments or suggestions on the Loch Chonnail Railway Walk please contact:
Inga Bock, Rural Recreation Officer
Email: ibock@dldc.org
Tel: 087 9318077

In the event of accidents and/or emergencies:
Please call 999 or 112 and ask for Mountain Rescue,
Police or Gardai or in the case of a fire, the Fire Service

