



THE
FOLLIES TRUST

GATE PIERS TO
THE BEEHIVE LODGE,
MARKREE CASTLE,
COLLOONEY, CO. SLIGO



MARKREE CASTLE has no less than nine gate lodges including the Dublin gate which is said to have inspired the celebrated hymn writer, Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander, to compose *All things bright and beautiful*. The lodges were erected at different times, from c.1803, by architects who included Ireland's leading practitioner at the time, Francis Johnston, and the eclectic Englishman, Francis Goodwin whose Irish masterpiece, Lissadell House, is nearby in County Sligo. The beehive lodge and gate piers, so called because of the unique gate pillars with chiselled honey skeps, were commissioned c.1835 by Edward Joshua Cooper, MP for the County of Sligo, and most likely designed by Goodwin.



A deer park was a prominent feature of many demesnes. They were multi-functional spaces containing woodland and grazing pasture and other features such as rabbit warrens and fishponds. Deer parks were used for hunting but were also an important source of food and timber for the estate; they needed to be enclosed to keep animals in and intruders out. Markree had three gate lodges to its deer park which housed gamekeepers and others involved in the activities undertaken in the park. The historic photograph shows the height of hoop-topped railings and matching carriage gates deemed necessary to keep deer within the park.



'INSET INTO THE BASES ... ARE BEAUTIFULLY CHISELLED SANDSTONE HONEY SKEPS, ABOVE WHICH RISE COLUMNS IN THE FORM OF BOUND BUNDLES OF RODS TOPPED BY A CAST-IRON AXE, OR FASCES.'



The beehive gate piers which mark the former entrance to the deer park on the estate are of particular interest. Described by J.A.K Dean in *Gate Lodges of Connaught* as 'unique' they incorporate 'fascies' which were a symbol of power and authority originating in the Etruscan civilisation. In his description of the gate piers, Dean explains how 'inset into the bases ... are beautifully chiselled sandstone honey skeps, above which rise columns in the form of bound bundles of rods topped by a cast-iron axe, or fascies.'

Fascies were originally a bundle of wooden rods with an axe bound together by a leather thong. They represented imperium or executive authority. They were traditionally carried in Ancient Rome by a Lictor, a Roman Officer who bore the fascies as an insignia of his office and whose duties included accompanying the Chief Magistrate in public office. In the twentieth century the fascies were used as a symbol of authority in Fascist Italy. It was surmised that bee skeps might allude to eloquence as well as to industry whereas the fascies suggest justice and authority.

In the 1950s the original gates were removed and the gate piers were moved to facilitate traffic.

The various elements of the sandstone piers were originally joined by iron cramps. Over time water has infiltrated the piers and the iron cramps have corroded. This has caused the iron to expand and in places the stone has split. The purpose of the conservation work was to remove the iron cramps, replace them with stainless steel, repair the stonework and re-erect the piers. The purpose of good conservation is not to renew but to repair so that people are unaware of the work undertaken. The stonework will not be cleaned as this removes the patina of age which is an important part of these gate piers which are over 180 years old.



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The Follies Trust has been campaigning for – and conserving – Irish follies since 2006. During that time we have been involved in the conservation of 31 structures in 12 counties. The Trust undertakes projects in a variety of ways. For some we are the client, raise all the funds and supervise the entire project; for others we work with a local group and provide match funding, ensuring work is undertaken to best conservation standards. Follies Trust always employs surveyors, architects and contractors with proven conservation expertise.



July 2022 - gate pier being dismantled prior to conservation in Feelystone workshop.

On the project to conserve the beehive gate piers at Markree Follies Trust is the client and will be working with Wendy Lyons, Conservation Consultant, Feelystone and Bushy Park Ironworks.

The Follies Trust is grateful to Sligo County Council and in particular to Siobhan Ryan, Heritage Officer, for support and advice and to the Heritage Council and the owner of the gate lodge for financial support.



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



The Follies Trust has published 8 booklets on the conservation work it has undertaken around Ireland. If you would like further information please go to www.follies-trust.org