**Cong and The Neale Summary Text**

* **Amenities**

This section of the survey for the parishes of Cong and The Neale contains a description of Cong village, population in 1945, 200. Mention is also made of the villages of Cross and The Neale. The various services, organisations and amenities are listed. Included in these are a private lending library in Ashford Castle; Distin’s Flour Mill, Cong; Forestry Dept. Sawmill, Cong; The Neale Dramatic Club; Ashford Industries; churches in Cong and The Neale. There is no listing of schools in the area.

* **Topography**

The outstanding features of the landscape of the Cong area are the lakes, Corrib and Mask, which are described in detail here. Numerous islands in the lakes are mentioned including Inchagoill, Ardillaun and Inishconga on Lough Corrib and Inishtocht, Inishgleasta, Inishmaine, Inishowen and Inishcoog on Lough Mask. The area to the east and north-east of Cong is described as relatively commonplace but with a wealth of archaeological and historical sites. This area is identified by Sir William Wilde in his writings as the scene of the battle of Moytura South, but the surveyor doubts the historical authenticity saying that Wilde’s claims “leave many puzzling uncertainties”.

* **Geology**

This section of the survey of Cong and The Neale is interesting for the description of the numerous caves and underground waterways in the vicinity of Cong. Included are Poll na Colum or the “Pigeon Hole”, The Priest’s Cave, the Horse Discovery, The Ladies’ Buttery, Webb’s Cave, Kelly’s Cave, Marc Anthony’s Pool, Poll Mór and Ballymaglancy Cave. There is also a page devoted to the ill-fated Corrib Mask canal, work on which commenced in the middle of the nineteenth century but was eventually abandoned because the bed of the canal supposedly would not hold water. The roles of engineers Nimmo, Kane and Bald are mentioned.

* **Antiquities**

The entire section on antiquities in Cong and The Neale occupies 14 pages in the survey so for greater convenience of access some of the material has been allocated different headings. The first 5 pages of antiquities in Cong and The Neale can be read in the section on “Cong Abbey”. Also, antiquities located on various islands are described in the section “Islands in Lough Corrib and Lough Mask”. The remainder of the antiquities section is included here and includes the following:

* Stone monuments: - Killower Cairn, Nymphsfield Circles, Ballymagibbon Cairn, Carn an Aonfhir, The Field of the Hurlers, Long Stone of The Neale.
* Souterrains: - Lisheenard, Kildun, Attyrickard Cave, Caher Riobaird.
* Ancient church ruins: - Killarsagh, Kilfraochaun, Kilmolara, Ballinchalla, Cahernacole,.
* Castles: - Cong Castle, Lough Mask Castle, Inishmaine Castle, The Neale Castle, Castle and church of Cross East – Attyrickard, Ahalahard Castle, Ballykine Castle.
* Chalices, crosses etc.: - Description of various chalices belonging to the Catholic clergy of the parish and a bog oak crucifix in the possession of Father Neary, P.P. of Cong. Also described is the Market Cross at Cong,
* **Cong Abbey**

There are over 5 pages of text devoted to Cong Abbey under the heading of Antiquities so for the convenience of the reader it has been allocated a separate category here. The surveyor traces the history of the abbey from its foundation on what was the site of an establishment by St. Fechin. The building was destroyed twice in the 12th century and rebuilt in 1137 by Turlough Mór O’Connor. It was suppressed in 1542. Brief details are given of the connection with the abbey of various members of the O’Duffy family. Antiquities associated with the abbey are also described including the Cross of Cong, the Fiachal Phadraig (Shrine of St. Patrick’s Tooth), the Cathach of the O’Donnells, the Fuil ‘a Riogh, and the bullaun stone Leac na bPoll .

* **Islands in Lough Corrib and Lough Mask.**

Descriptions of various islands in the lakes are included under the heading of Antiquities in the survey but are given a separate heading here. They include:

* + Inchagoill: - Described by the surveyor as the most interesting island on Lough Corrib. Antiquities described are Teampull Phadraig, the Lugnaedon stone and Teampull na Naomh.
  + Inishmaine:- On Lough Mask and technically no longer an island as it became joined to the mainland when the waters of Lough Mask were lowered on the construction of the Corrib/Mask canal. The two items of most interest here are Inishmaine Abbey and the “Sweat-house” or Penitentiary. There are also the remains of an ancient stone fort.
  + Inishowen: - Also on Lough Mask, the main item of interest here is the remnants of a large fort.
* **Customs**

This section of the survey of Cong and The Neale describes the custom of “Crusheens” or “Croisíní”, where monuments are erected to the dead at places other than their death or burial. Examples of three crusheen sites in the area are given. There is also a brief note on the pattern at St. Cecilia’s Well at Drumsheel.

* **Historic sites.**

This section deals mainly with a discussion on the merits or otherwise of claims by Sir William Wilde that the Battle of Moytura took place in the Cong and The Neale area. The surveyor admits that there is evidence in the area of a battle having taken place at some stage but that from the manuscript sources the battle of Moytura took place in Sligo. There is also brief mention of a hedge school under one of the arches of Cong Bridge.

* **Distinguished personalities.**

Included in this section are notes on Sir William Wilde and Oscar Wilde, Captain Boycott, George MacNamara – a Robin Hood type figure who owned Cong abbey and lands in the 18th century, Lord Abbot Prendergast, General George Blake who was involved in the 1798 rebellion and C.D.D. MacLagan.

* **Ashford Castle**

This is the only entry under the heading for Mansions, Castles and Estates in the survey for Cong and The Neale. The building and garden are described in some detail and the history of the building is traced from its origins as the residence of the Earl of Oranmore and Browne, through the extensions by the Guinness family. The last of these extensions was carried out by Lord Ardilaun, son of Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness. The surveyor writes in very unflattering terms about Lord Ardilaun and his architectural tastes. At the time of the survey it was owned by Noel Huggard who acquired it in 1938.

* **Curiosities**

This section of the survey includes notes on “the Gods of The Neale” at Neale Park, formerly the residence of Lord Kilmaine; the Lonsecnan Stone which had been set nearby but shortly prior to the survey was removed to its original site at Breaffy; “The Pyramid”, also at The Neale and constructed by Lord Kilmaine probably in the 19th century; “The Temple” also located at Neale Park.

* **Sports and games.**

Sporting activities in the Cong and the Neale area included angling on Loughs Corrib and Mask, Cross River and Cong River, golfing at Ashford Castle and shooting in the area generally. Also listed are The Neale Gaelic Football Club, handball alley at Cong, tennis, and private facilities at Ashford Castle for bowls, billiards, croquet, and table tennis.