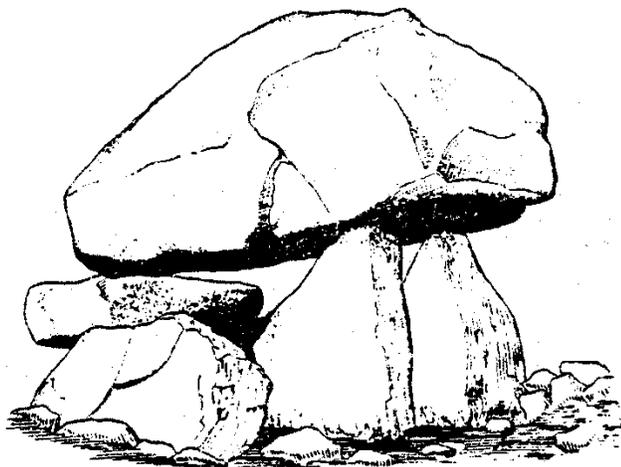


# ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



**Supplement to Survey Report: No. 4**

**Survey of St Mary's Church, Ballaghanery Upper, County Down  
UAS/06/04**

## **GRAVEYARD SURVEY**

In association with



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A site survey was undertaken at Saint Mary's Church, County Down (SMR number DOW 049:012), in the townland of Ballaghanery Upper, County Down, Irish Grid reference J 3872 2676.



Figure 1: Location map for St Mary's Church, County Down

The survey was carried out on Saturday 24 June 2006 by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society. It was undertaken in response to a decision taken by the committee of the society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments that had not previously been recorded. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Mr Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites and St Mary's Old Church was subsequently chosen to be the fourth of these. During the survey, it was observed that many burials had taken place adjacent to the remains of the church and it was decided to carry out an investigation into these burials and to publish the results in a separate supplement.

## 1. SURVEY

A number of small granite boulders were observed during the survey, principally on the southern side of the monument. These were interpreted as grave markers, although some may be structural remains from the church building. All were recorded using the Memorial Recording Form suggested by Harold Mytum and the results tabulated below (2000, 80). All visible grave markers were recorded, but more may be present along the western boundary of the site, which was not surveyed due to the presence of impenetrable bushes.



Figure 2: UAS Survey of grave markers, looking west

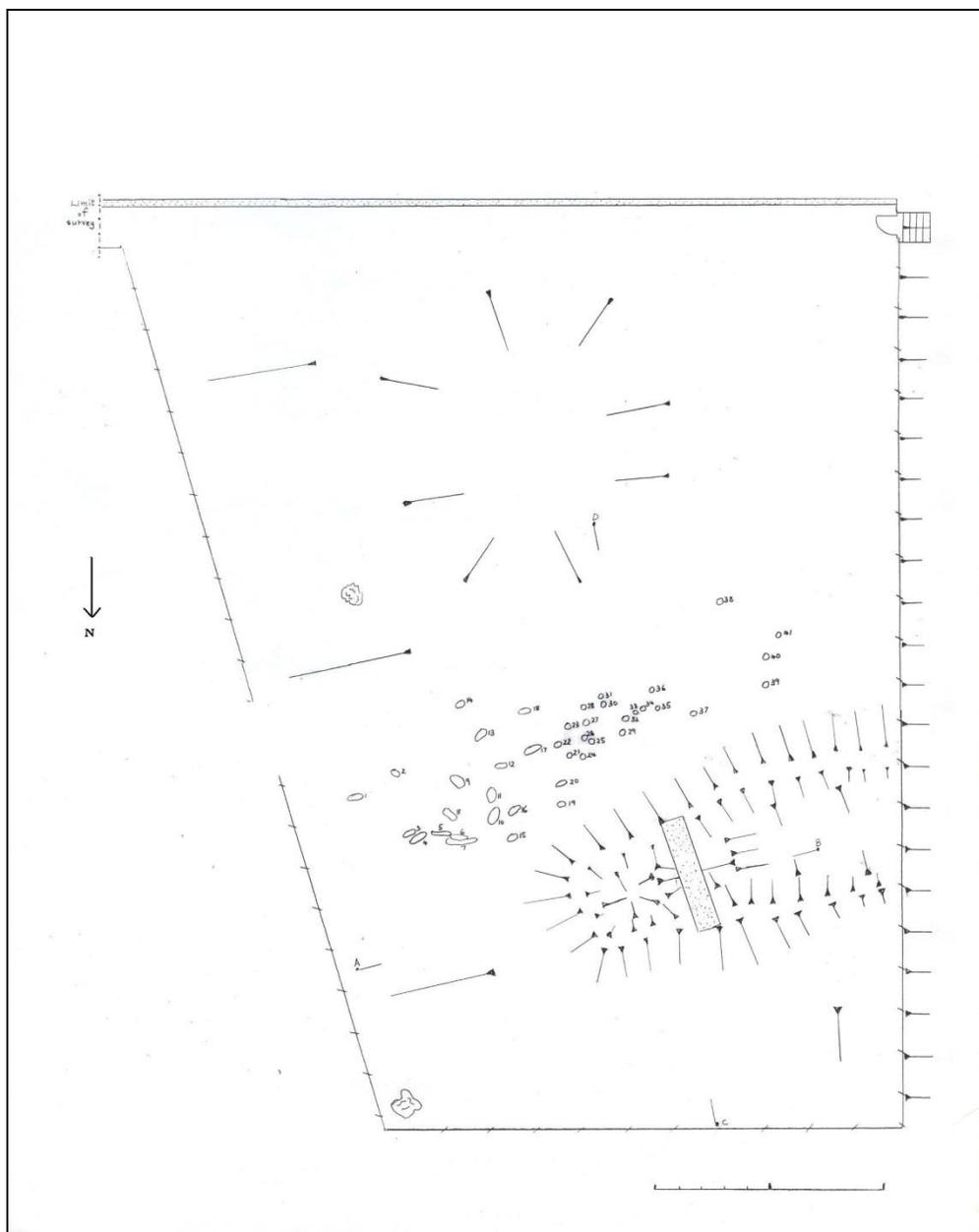


Figure 3: Plan of St Mary's Church and graveyard, with grave markers indicated



Figure 4: View of typical grave marker



Figure 5: Grave markers, looking south-west

Number	Height(m)	Width(m)	Length(m)	Type	Add.Elements	Material	Orientation
S01	0.1			8400	1000	30	N/S
S02	0.65	0.33	0.20	8480	1000	30	
S03	0.80	0.39	0.42	8400	1000	30	
S04	0.16	0.47		8400	1000	10	
S05	0.61	0.77	0.30	8400	1000	10	N/E
S06	0.26	0.37	0.27			30	
S07	0.38	0.38	0.87	8400	1000	10	WNW
S08	0.22	0.42	0.55	8400	1000	30	
S09	0.28	0.30	0.30	8400	1000	30	E/W
S10	0.10	0.37	0.62	8400	1000	10	
S11	0.24	0.20	0.50	8400	1000	10	E
S12	0.12	0.30	0.32	8400		30	
S13	0.18	0.23	0.37	8400	1000	30	
S14		0.17	0.31	8400	1000	30	
S15	0.50	0.46	0.60	8400	1000	10	NE/SW
S16	0.17	0.26	0.50	8400	1000	10	NNE
S17	0.23	0.25	0.47	8400	1000	10	
S18	0.31	0.23	0.30	8400	1000	30	E
S19	0.16	0.15	0.48	8400	1000	10	E
S20	0.12	0.30	0.33	8400	1000	10	
S21	0.13	0.40	0.98	8480	1000	30	NW/SE
S22	0.43	0.49	0.13	8400	1000	10	E
S23	0.14	0.11	0.28	8400	1000	10	E
S24	0.47	0.24	0.50			30	E
S25	0.20	0.15	0.23	8400	1000	10	E
S26	0.17	0.10	0.38	8400	1000	10	E
S27	0.12	0.16	0.41	8400	1000	30	W
S28	0.26	0.16	0.09	8400	1000	10	E
S29	0.15	0.21	0.22	8400	1000	30	
S30	0.24	0.16	0.26	8400	1000	30	W
S31	0.25	0.38	0.23	8400	1000	30	E
S32	0.13	0.13	0.30	8400	1000	40	E
S33	0.08	0.36	0.60	8400	1000	10	
S34	0.13	0.24	0.42	8400		30	
S35		0.14	0.27	8400		40	
S36	0.07	0.49	0.41			40	
S37	0.14	0.24	0.09	8400	1000	30	E
S38	0.20	0.38	0.21	8400	1000	30	E
S39	0.22	0.20	0.24	8480	1000	30	S/W
S40	0.30	0.41	0.08	8480	1000	10	E
S41	0.14	0.30	0.15	8400	1000	30	E
S42	0.22	0.37	0.11	8400	1000	30	N/E
S43	0.22	0.23	0.14			10	
N1	0.23	0.55	0.55	8400	1000	10	
N2	0.14	0.46	0.37			30	
N3	0.21	0.28	0.13	8400	1000	10	E
N4	0.24	0.19	0.40	8400	1000	10	E
N5	0.20	0.53	0.42	8400	1000	30	

Figure 6: Tabulated graveyard survey details

Code	Explanation
8400	Rock, rough
8480	Rock, smooth
1000	Foot stone
40	Sandstone
30	Granite
10	Slate

Figure 7: Key to Figure 6 above (After Mytum 2000, 79-136)

## 2. DISCUSSION

Of the forty-eight grave markers surveyed, half (50%) were identified as being composed of granite, a rock abundant in this area. Of the remainder that could be identified in the field, 21 were of slate (43.8%) and 3 (6.25%) were of sandstone. Co-incidentally, all these rock types were represented in the reconstructed arch of the adjacent church building.

The orientation of twenty-eight of the grave markers could be positively determined and of these, 22 (79%) were oriented east/west, seeming to confirm that these markers were not placed randomly, but instead complied with traditional Christian burial practices. This would further reinforce the view that that the majority of these boulders are indeed grave markers.

The maximum height of grave marker present was 80cm (stone number S03) and the minimum height present was 7.0cm (stone number S36). Similarly, the maximum width was 77cm (stone number S05) and minimum width 10cm (stone number S26). The maximum length recorded was 98cm (stone number S21) and minimum length was 8.0cm (stone number S40). These larger of these sizes indicate that considerable effort was expended in erecting some of the grave markers, suggesting that the people who were buried there were held in some esteem by the local community. This is contrary to the description of the site by the Archdeacon of Down in 1844, when he suggested that it did not appear 'to be regarded with any peculiar reverence by the country people; further than the ground about it is used principally for the burial of the children of Romanists, many of whose little graves are visible around its ruined walls' (1844, 18).

The proximity to the church remains would also suggest that these burials were deliberately made into what would have been regarded as consecrated ground, but by the 1950s, however, the perceived sanctity of the ground may not have been so apparent, as Evans noted that it was 'used into the present century for the interment of unbaptised children and vagrants' (Evans 1951, 105), a suggestion repeated in 1984 (Steele 1984, p. 2). Some support for these activities can be found in local newspapers, such as the *Down Recorder*, which detailed the burial of a body that had been washed up between Maggie's Leap and Armour's Hole in 1906 (*Down Recorder*, 14 July 1906).

Interestingly, the NIEA have on file a photograph (figure 8 below) of a skull, purported to have been found by Mr Fitzpatrick in the Chancel in about 1965 (NIEA, SMR DOW 049:012).

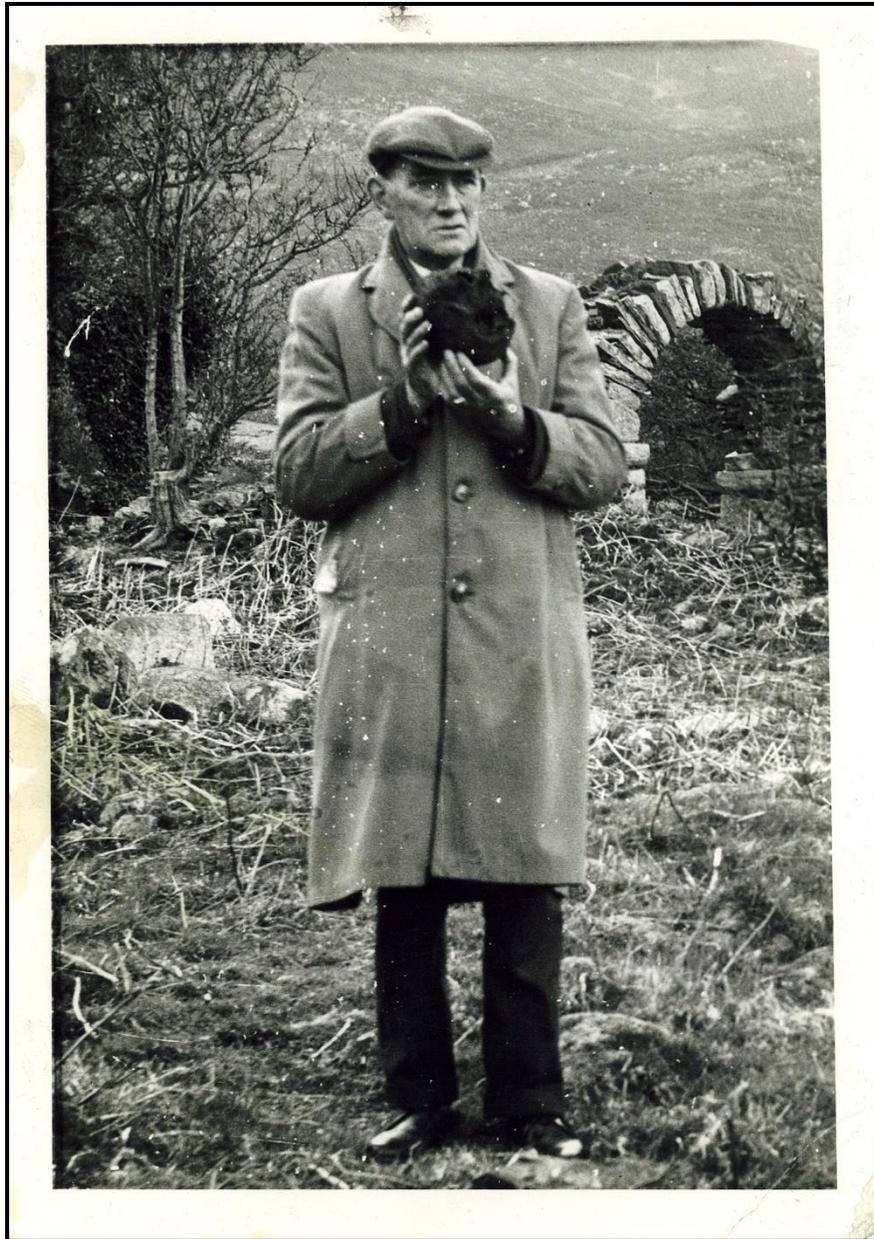


Figure 8: Skull found in the Chancel, c. 1965, *Northern Ireland Environment Agency*

### The possibility of an enclosure

St Mary's Church was surveyed during the Archaeological Survey of County Down, when it was noted that 'a line of piled stone to the E. of the church may possibly be the remains of a graveyard enclosure' (1966, 299). No evidence for this line of stone was observed during the 2006 UAS survey. However, it has been claimed that the graveyard extended towards the west of the church and that when the adjacent road was being widened in the mid-nineteenth century, bones, gold rings and jewellery were dug up by the workmen (*Mourne Observer*, 7 December 1962). In 1991, in a recently-cut grass field to the west of the site and across the main Newcastle

to Annalong road, a series of crop marks were observed. These were described as ‘several small circular and sub-circular cropmarks visible as dark rings. 3 rings can be identified, along with possible traces of others. These are roughly 4m in diameter. Hints of cropmarks are also visible in a field just to N – but these are indistinct’ (NIEA SMR: DOW 049:016). Similar features were also noted at another ecclesiastical site at Kilmelogue, about six miles to the south-south-west (Macdonald & McIlreavy 2007, 2). It may be that the remains of an enclosure lie undiscovered in the fields to the west of the site.

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- Mid-nineteenth century. ‘*The ancient Church of Ballagh, Dundrum Castle in the distance taken from near the Bloody Bridge, Newcastle, County Down*’ Ink sketch and colour wash by an unknown artist [possibly Dr James Moore], in private ownership.
- Down Recorder*, 14 July 1906.
- Dublin Penny Journal*, Vol. III, No. 107, 19 July 1834, 20.

## APPENDIX

**PHOTOGRAPH RECORD FORM**

**Site:** St Mary's Church, Ballaghanery Upper, County Down

**Date:** 24 June 2006 & 14 March 2008

Film no.	B/W Print	Colour print	Colour slide	Digital image (m.pixels)
				5.1

Make and model of camera: *Nikon Coolpix S1*

Frame no	Direction viewed from	Details
001	North	Main road (A2) Newcastle to Annalong
002	East	Gate and 5 steps to road
003	North	Signboard near to gate
004	North	Large stone
005	West	Back view of arch
006	North	Tea lights set within arch
007	South	Reduction in size of arch
008	North	View of arch interior at full width
009	South	Base of arch on north side showing partial collapse
010	West	Corner tree
011	North	View of site (chancel)
012	North	View of site (nave)
013	North	View of north wall of nave truncated by road
014	East	View of south wall of nave truncated by road
015	East	Stone number 9
016	East	Beside stone Number 9 (possibly number 13)
017	East	Alignment of stones
018	West	Tree number 2
019	East	View of site
020	South	View of site