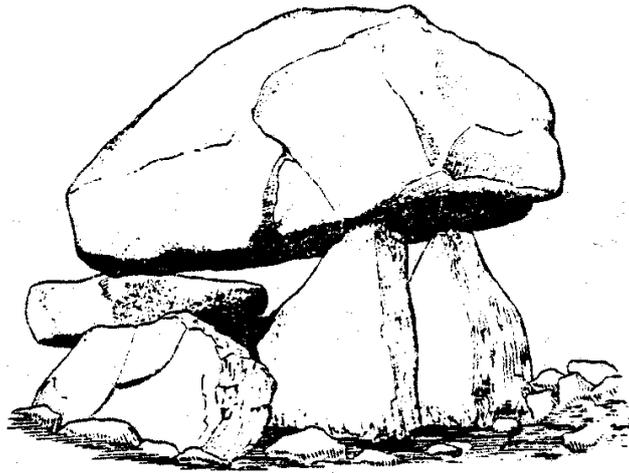


ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Survey Report: No. 1

**Survey of Forthill Rath, Creevyloughgare,
Saintfield, County Down
UAS/06/01**

In association with

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**

HENRY WELSH

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Ulster Archaeological Society
c/o School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology
The Queen's University of Belfast
42 Fitzwilliam Street
Belfast
BT9 6AX

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1. Summary

1.1 A site survey was undertaken at Forthill Rath (SMR number: DOW 023:003), in the townland of Creevyloughgare, Saintfield, County Down, Irish Grid reference J407571.

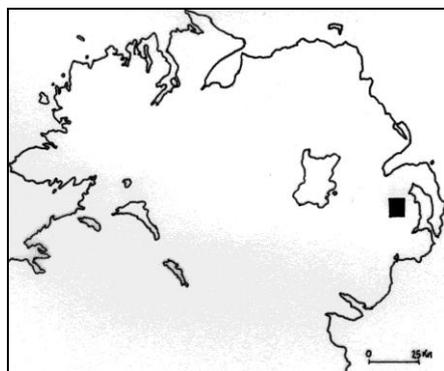


Figure 1: Location map for Saintfield, County Down

Forthill Rath, or ringfort, is located within the grounds of the National Trust's Rowallane Estate and the land on which it is situated is currently leased for grazing sheep. This was the first in a series of planned surveys to be undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Illustration 1: Forthill Rath viewed from the west

1.2 In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce an accurate plan and section drawing of the monument, carry out a photographic survey and complete a Condition And Management Survey of the Archaeological Resource (CAMSAR) record form. This information was compiled into a report and submitted to the Environment and Heritage Service and the National Trust.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of Forthill Rath was carried out on Saturday 29 April 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 the rath at Creevyloughgare, Saintfield was subsequently chosen to be the first of these.



Illustration 2: Ulster Archaeological Society Survey Team at work at Forthill Rath

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

Forthill Rath had previously been inspected by a representative from the Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland in July 1993. At this time, it was found that:

This rath stands in the Rowallane demesne on the crest of a hill in the middle of a field its interior planted with a small copse of mature deciduous trees – ash, sycamore and beech. The grass in the field was being harvested for silage. This is the substantial remains of a raised or platform rath; a section of the enclosure has been removed at the E. side and the two horns of the remaining arc of the bank have been joined by a neat revetment, or Louth bank, and planted with quickthorn. The interior is flat and grass covered with clumps of nettles and foxgloves and planted with deciduous trees; it measures 42.5 m N-S at its broadest, 30 m E-W and the chord of the arc is 33.5 m N-S. The bank has been revetted around its base which has created a 2m

wide ridge of ledge at the top of the revetment with the rest of the bank rising above it. The height of the bank above the interior is .70 m and it is 2 m above the field level and 5 m wide including the ledge. There is a small wide modern entrance at centre E. that is post the revetment. There is no visible evidence of a ditch (EHS 1993, 1).

2.3 Cartographic evidence

Forthill rath was previously recorded by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, which subsequently became the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland. The first cartographic survey was carried out in 1832, when a clear break in the bank was recorded at the south-east.

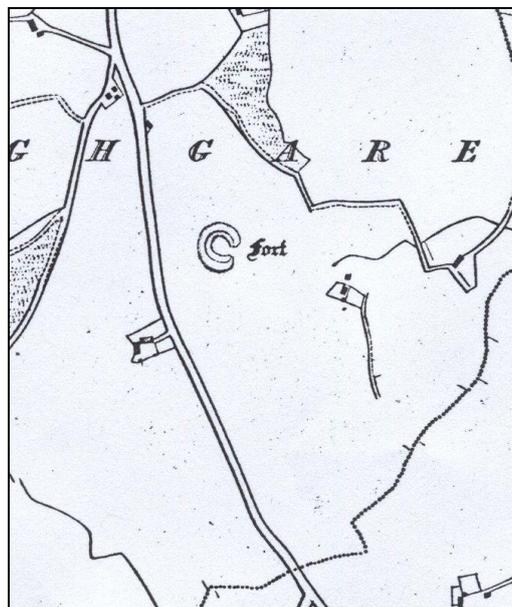


Figure 2: Ordnance Survey, First Edition, 1835 (scale 6" to 1 mile)

The site was again recorded on the Second Edition map in 1859, by which time no gap was evident in the earthworks.

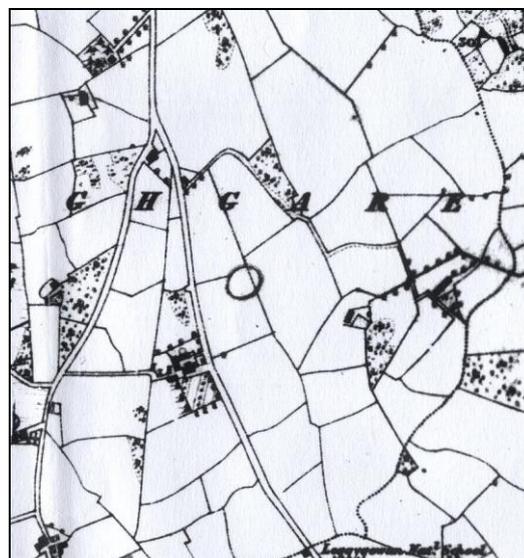


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey, Second Edition, 1859 (scale 6" to 1 mile)

However there is an indication of an anomaly in the circularity of the enclosure on the western side that was also observed during the 2006 survey, suggesting that the original survey had been accurately undertaken. Further and possibly more significantly, a field boundary is shown transecting the monument in a north-north west, south-south east alignment. This boundary correlates well with the present line of truncation of the monument on the eastern side.

By the time of the Third Edition map of 1932, the plan of the rath had clearly been modified in that a section of the eastern bank has been removed to the east of the 1859 field boundary. The truncated plan of the monument is very similar to that recorded during the 2006 survey.

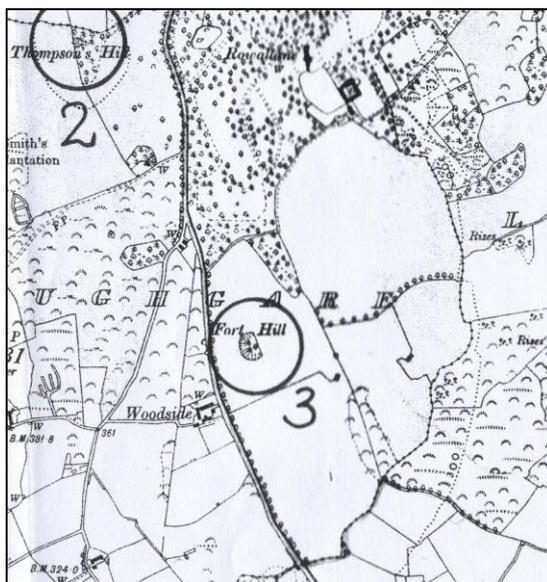


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey, Third Edition, 1932 (scale 6" to 1 mile)

2.5 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Environment and Heritage Service and the National Trust. All site records are temporarily archived with the Honorary Archivist of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

2.6 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team were Billy Dunlop, Tom Fairley, Ian Gillespie, Julie Hanse, Ian McCauley, Anne MacDermott, Mary Mulvenna and George Rutherford.

The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Mr Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access. Assistance was also given by staff of the Queen's University of Belfast, particularly Mr Barrie Hartwell for providing instruction on survey techniques and Mr John Davison for arranging the loan of additional items of survey equipment.

3. Survey

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan and profile drawings, accompanied by a photographic survey and the completion of a Condition And Management Survey of the Archaeological Resource (CAMSAR) form. A report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material.

3.2 Production of plan and profile drawings

Plan and profile drawings were completed, using data obtained from a field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device.

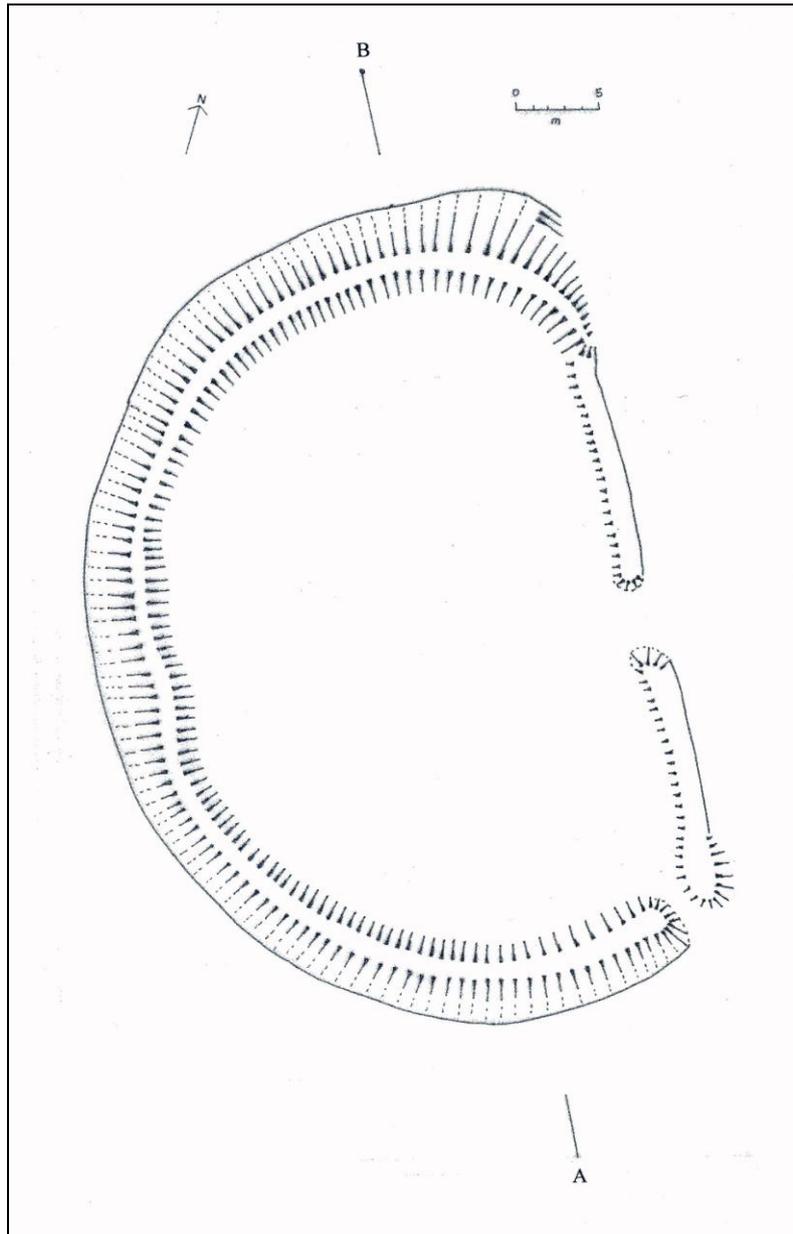


Figure 5: plan of Forthill Rath

Sketch plans at 1:200 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

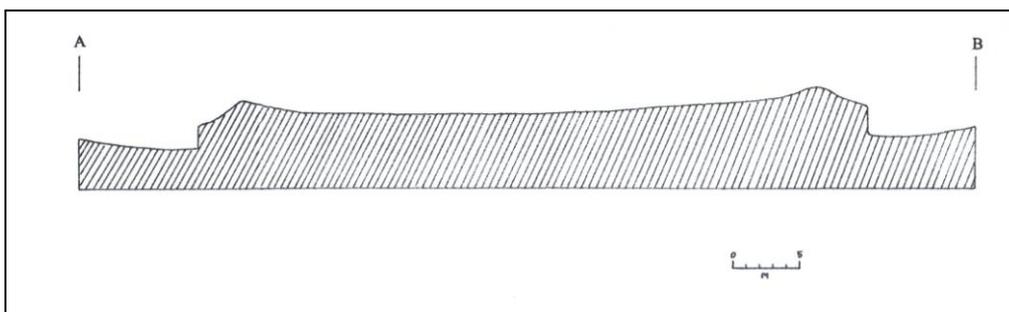


Figure 6: Profile A-B of Forthill Rath

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Nikon Coolpix S1 5.1* megapixel digital camera and a photograph record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 29 April 2006. Another series of photographs were taken during a previous visit to the site by members of the survey team on 26 November 2005 and these are included in the photographic archive. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

3.4 Completion of CAMSAR form

A Condition And Management Survey of the Archaeological Resource (CAMSAR) form was completed by the survey team on 29 April 2006 and is given in appendix 1 below. As far as is known, this is the first occasion on which this type of record form has been completed for the monument.

4. Discussion

This monument sits on a hilltop in Creevyloughgare townland with good views to the east and south. A small mound (DOW 023:002) is located 625 metres to the north-north-west, in the same townland. Another, raised rath (DOW 023:001) is located 1.5 kilometres to the west-north-west in the townland of Tonaghmore and an enclosure (DOW 023:005) is located 750 metres to the south-east in the townland of Leggygowan. Of these monuments, only the rath in Tonaghmore townland has been scheduled under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

The internal diameter of Forthill rath is 38.5m at its widest point (north-west to south-east) and 26m from the interior of the eastern bank to the modern entrance (south-west to north-east). The internal dimensions of this rath place it among the larger examples so far recorded (Edwards 1990, 14). In addition to this entrance, a smaller opening has been created by the collapse of earth and stone where the bank terminates at the south-east.

The monument has been classified as a raised or platform rath (EHS 1993, 1). A suggested definition of a platform rath was one having 'a perimeter bank around the top area which slopes down towards the entrance...sometimes reached across a causeway or up a ramp' (Jope 1966, cited in Kerr 2005, 9). Another factor is the height of the interior of the monument above the external ground surface, varying between 3-4m and 2m (ibid.). With regard to Forthill rath, analysis of the 1835 Ordnance Survey map seems to indicate the presence of a ramped entrance, but consideration of the internal height above ground level (1-1.5m) suggests that it is more likely to be raised than a true platform rath.

Analysis of the profile diagram (figure 1 above) indicates that the hilltop has been extensively modified to enhance the appearance of the monument. This seems likely to have taken place when the monument was truncated, at some time between 1859 and 1932 and a number of other features confirm efforts to landscape the monument. These include the provision of stone revetments around the exterior circumference of the bank (see illustration 3).



Illustration 3: Stone revetment around external face of bank

In addition, four regularly-spaced ash trees were planted along the interior of the eastern side and other deciduous trees, such as sycamore and beech, planted within the circumference of the bank to create an artificial copse (see illustration 4). There is no visible evidence to indicate the presence of a souterrain.



Illustration 4: Artificial copse inside monument

5. Recommendations for further work

The monument is not protected from access by grazing animals and is therefore liable to damage from this source. The National Trust may therefore wish to consider restricting animal access to the site by the provision of a suitable fence. Further, trees present within the interior of the monument are of substantial size and are liable to damage the site by root activity. The National Trust may wish to consider restricting the further spread of such trees and regularly pruning those that are already there.

6. Bibliography

Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, Environment and Heritage Service (EHS). 1993. Sites and Monument Record SM7 file DOW 023:003, Creevyloughgare.

Edwards, N. 1990. *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, London: Batsford.

Kerr, T.R. 2005. 'Early Christian Settlement in North-West Ulster', Unpublished PhD Thesis, the Queen's University of Belfast.

APPENDIX 1 CAMSAR record form

CAMSAR Record Form Forthill Rath, County Down 2006
UAS DSR 001

NISM No. Appendix 2: CAMSAR Record Form	Grid Reference S407571	Townland CLERYWESKAKE
Landuse Cat. 1	Structural Cat. 3	Site Type PLATFORM RATH
Field Boundaries (e.g. contemporary/intrusive later/owners attitude towards monument i.e. dis/regard) STONE WALLS		Protection
Altitude 		

Site description/ notes
LARGE PLATFORM RATH ON HILLTOP. SURROUNDED BY DITCH. TRUNKATED ON NORTHERN SIDE. THE INTERIOR HAS TWO RAISED PLATFORMS. 3 POSSIBLE HUT SITES.

On Site			Around Site		Comments
Previous	Present	% site	Previous	Present	
	17	80%		100%	SITE USED FOR SHEEP GRAZING AT TIME OF INSPECTION.

Fencing Site Fenced? Y/N **N.**
Condition (e.g. recent/broken)
Type of fence
Distance of fence from edge of monument

Remains	Is the site visible? ① 2 3 4	Archaeological site? Y/N?	Survival 1 ② 3 4 5 6	Condition 1 2 ③ 4 5 6
Comments (e.g. human interference and management) NORTHERN EDGE HAS BEEN CUT BACK. NOW HAS A STONE WALL MATURE TREES INTERNALLY AND ON BANKS				

Surface Problems (e.g. ploughing, trampling, planting, scrub growth: localized/widespread)
AS ABOVE

Sub-Surface Problems (e.g. rabbits, badgers, subsidence: localized/widespread)
USED BY SHEEP

Damage Sustained						Observations
Past		Recent		Future Risk		
Category	Extent	Category	Extent	Category	Extent	PROPERTY OF NATIONAL TRUST CURRENTLY USED BY FARMER.
		4	20%			

Photographs YES	Recommendations
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Map Evidence 1st Ed	2nd Ed	3rd Ed	Last Visit Date of last visit 29-4-06 Deteriorated since last visit?
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Recorder Julie Harvie	Date 1 1 29-4-06
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Appendix 2: Photographic Record

Nikon Coolpix S1 Digital Camera

26 November 2005

- 1 View of rath looking west
- 2 View of rath looking north
- 3 View of rath looking east
- 4 View of rath looking south
- 5 Possible ditch looking north-west
- 6 Possible ditch looking south-east
- 7 Revetment of bank at south-east quadrant
- 8 Revetment of bank at western quadrant
- 9 Close-up of revetment at west
- 10 Chord of arc at east side showing ash trees
- 11 View of interior face of bank at south
- 12 View of interior of rath, showing mature deciduous trees
- 13 View of interior of rath, showing interior face of bank at east
- 14 View of interior of rath, showing possible house platform

Nikon Coolpix S1 Digital Camera

29 April 2006

- 1 Stone revetment on east side
- 2 Height of bank north-west side
- 3 Interior of rath (platform)
- 4 Interior of rath (possible house platform) north side
- 5 Interior of rath from north side
- 6 Interior of rath facing entrance



